Sunset

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/856330.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Abigail Hobbs, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Freddie Lounds, Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Franklyn Froideveaux, Dr. Chilton, Eldon Stammets, Georgia Madchen, Tobias Budge, Will's Dad, The Stag (Hannibal)
Additional Tags:	Canon-Typical Violence, Developing Relationship, Vampires, Alternate Universe - Fusion, Alternate Universe - High School, Alternate Universe - Twilight Fusion, Melodrama, Teen Angst, Werewolves, Alternate Universe - Vampire, Possessive Behavior, Vampire Hannibal, Werewolf Beverly
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2013-06-24 Updated: 2013-08-14 Words: 29,458 Chapters: 7/?

Sunset

by thisisthefamilybusiness

Summary

About three things Will was absolutely positive. First, Hannibal was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him—and Will didn't know how potent that part might be—that thirsted for Will's blood. And third, Will was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him.

(Fill for the following prompt on HannibalKink: "Will is a teenage boy who's just moved to Forks, WA. Now he has to deal with being the awkward new kid in school. Hannibal is a mysterious fellow student, with piercing red eyes, and Will can't stop thinking about him.... also Hannibal sparkles in direct sunlight. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY I WANT THIS.")

Notes

The majority of this is literally just rephrased directly from 'Twilight'. If the writing sounds off at some point, it's probably because I struggled to meld my writing style with Meyer's.

This is also set in a universe where everyone is bisexual and that's fine-and-dandy with the world.

First Sight

The classroom was small. The people in front of Will stopped just inside the door to hang up their coats on a long row of hooks. He copied them. They were two girls, one a porcelain-coloured brunette, the other also pale, with auburn-coloured hair. At least Will's pallor wouldn't be a stand-out here.

Will took the admission slip to the teacher, a tall, balding man whose desk had a nameplate identifying him as Mr. Mason. He gawked at Will when he saw Jack Crawford listed as his guardian under Will's 'student information' section—not an encouraging response—and of course Will flushed tomato-red. But at least he sent Will to an empty desk at the back without introducing Will to the class. It was harder for his new classmates to stare at him in the back, but somehow, they managed. He kept his eyes down on the reading list the teacher had given him. It was fairly basic: Bronte, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Faulkner. He'd already read everything. That was comforting....and boring. Will wondered if he could turn in his old essays or if Jack would consider that cheating. Will went through different arguments with him in his head while the teacher droned on.

When the bell rang, a nasal buzzing sound, a boy with skin problems and curly brown hair leaned across the aisle to talk to Will.

"You're William Graham, aren't you?" He looked like the overly helpful, neurotic, chess club type.

"Will," corrected Will. Everyone within a three-seat radius turned to look at him.

"Where's your next class?" he asked.

Will had to check in his bag. "Uh, Government, with Jefferson, in building six."

There was nowhere to look without meeting curious eyes.

"I'm headed towards building four, I could show you the way..." Definitely over-helpful. "I'm Franklyn," he added.

Will smiled tentatively. "Thanks."

They got their jackets and headed out into the rain, which had picked up. Will could have sworn several people were walking close enough to eavesdrop. Will hoped he wasn't getting paranoid again.

"So, this is a lot different than Louisiana, huh?" Franklyn asked.

"Very."

"Does it rain much there?"

“Sometimes.”

“Wow, what must that be like?” he wondered.

“Muggy, usually,” Will told him.

“You don’t look very tan.”

“My father was albino.”

Franklyn studied Will’s face apprehensively, and Will sighed. It looked like clouds and a sense of humour didn’t mix. A few months of this and Will would forget how to use sarcasm.

They walked back around the cafeteria, to the south building by the gym. Franklyn walked him right to the door, though it was clearly marked.

“Well, good luck,” Frankly said as Will touched the handle. “Maybe we’ll have some other classes together.” He sounded hopeful.

Will smiled at him vaguely and went inside.

One girl sat next to Will in both Trig and French, and she walked with him to the cafeteria for lunch. She was petite, several inches shorter than Will, but her wildly curly red hair made up a lot of the difference between their heights. Will couldn’t remember her name, so he smiled and nodded as she prattled about teachers and classes. He didn’t try to keep up.

They sat at the end of a full table with several of her friends, who she introduced to Will. He forget all their named as soon she spoke them. They seemed impressed by her bravery in speaking to Will. The boy from English, Franklyn, waved at Will from across the room.

It was there, sitting in the lunchroom, trying to make conversation with seven curious strangers, that Will first saw him.

He was sitting in the corner of the cafeteria, as far away from where Will sat as possible in the long room. He was sitting alone, and he wasn’t eating, though he had a tray of untouched food in front of him. He wasn’t gawking at Will, unlike most of the other students, so it was safe to stare at him without fear of meeting an excessively interested pair of eyes. But it was none of these things that caught, and held, Will’s attention.

He was tall, lean but still muscular, with neatly slicked-back ash-coloured hair. He looked like he could have been in college, or even a teacher here rather than a student. He was chalky pale, the palest of all the students living in this sunless town. Paler than Will, the albino. He had dark eyes, with dark shadows under them—purplish, bruise-like shadows. As if he was suffering from a sleepless night, or almost done recovering from a broken nose. Though his nose, all his features, was straight, perfect, angular.

But all this is not why Will couldn’t look away.

Will stared because his face was devastatingly, inhumanely beautiful. It was a face you never expected to see anywhere except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel.

He was looking away—away from Will, away from all the other students, away from anything in particular as far as Will could tell.

"Who is *he*?" Will asked the girl from his French class, whose name he'd forgotten.

As she looked up to see who Will meant—though already knowing, probably, from Will's tone—suddenly he looked at her. He looked at her for just a fraction of a second, and then his dark eyes flickered to Will's.

He looked away from Will quickly, more quickly that Will could, though in a flush of embarrassment Will dropped his eyes at once. In that brief flash of a glance, his face held nothing of interest, nothing for Will to interpret as his design—it was as if he had called his name, and he'd looked up in involuntary response, already having decided not to answer.

His neighbour frowned, looking at the table like Will did.

"That's Hannibal Lecter. He lives with his uncle Robert; apparently his uncle is sick and can't leave the house so he had to move here to take care of him because Hannibal's an orphan and they don't have any other family." She said this under her breath.

Will glanced sideways at the beautiful boy, who was looking at his tray now, picking a bagel to pieces with long, pale fingers. His mouth moving very quickly, his perfect lips barely opening. He was alone, and yet Will felt like he was speaking quietly to them.

Strange, unpopular name, Will thought. The kind of name not even grandparents had. But maybe he was foreign—or maybe that was in vogue here, small town names? Will finally remembered that his neighbour from French was called Freddie, a perfectly common name.

"He is....very nice-looking." Will struggled with conspicuous understatement.

"Yeah," Freddie agreed. "And he's apparently super-rich—he before he came here to take care of his uncle, he went to boarding school. I think I read somewhere that they're Lithuanian nobility or something." Her tone held all the awe of a small town, Will thought critically. But, if he was being honest, Will had to admit he was just as surprised.

Throughout the conversation, Will's eyes flickered again and again to the table where Hannibal sat. He continued to look at the wall and not eat.

"Has he been here a while?" Will asked. Surely he would have noticed Hannibal on one of the times his dad had dumped him here with Jack before.

"No," she said in a voice that implied it should be obvious, even to a new arrival like Will. "He just moved here two years ago from Lithuania."

Will felt a surge of pity, and relief. Pity because, as beautiful as Hannibal was, he was an outsider, clearly not accepted. Relief that he wasn't the only newcomer here, and certainly not

the most interesting by any standard.

As Will examined Hannibal, he looked up and met Will's gaze, this time with evident curiosity in his expression. As Will looked swiftly away, it seemed to him that Hannibal's glance held some kind of unmet expectation.

"Hannibal's gorgeous, of course, but don't waste your time," Freddie warned.

Will peeked at Hannibal from the corner of his eye, and he was still staring at Will, but not gawking like the other students had today—he had a slightly frustrated expression. Will looked down again.

"He doesn't date. Apparently no one around here is good enough for him." She sniffed, a clear case of the sour grapes. Will wondered when he'd turned her down.

Will bit his lip to hide his smiled. Then he glanced at Hannibal again. His face was turned away, but he thought his cheek appeared lifted, as if he were smiling too.

After a few minutes, Hannibal left the table. He was noticeably graceful—it was unsettling to watch. Hannibal didn't look at Will again.

Will sat at the table with Freddie and her friends longer than he would have if he'd been sitting alone. He was anxious not to be late for class on his first day. One of his new acquaintances, who considerately reminded Will that her name was Georgia, had Biology II with him next hour. They walked to class together in silence. She was shy, too.

When they entered the classroom, Georgia went to sit at a black-topped table exactly like the ones Will was used to. She already had a neighbour. In fact, all the tables were filled but one. Next to the centre aisle, Will recognised Hannibal Lecter by his unusual hair, sitting next to that single open seat.

As Will walked down the aisle to introduce himself to the teacher and get his slip signed, he was watched Hannibal surreptitiously. Just as Will passed, Hannibal went rigid in his seat. He stared at him again, meeting Will's eyes with the strangest expression on his face—it was hostile, furious. Will looked away quickly, shocked, going red again. He stumbled over a book in the walkway and had to catch himself on the edge of the table. The girl sitting there giggled.

Will had noticed that Hannibal's eyes were black rimmed with maroon—coal black and blood red.

Mr. Banner signed Will's slip and handed him a book with no nonsense about introductions. Of course, Mr. Banner had no choice but to send Will to the one open seat in the middle of the room. Will kept his eyes down as he went to sit by *him*, bewildered by the antagonistic stare Hannibal had given him.

Will didn't look up as he set his book on the table and took his seat, but he saw Hannibal's posture change from the corner of his eye. He was leaning away from Will, sitting on the extreme edge of his chair and averting his face like he smelled something bad.

Inconspicuously, Will sniffed his shoulder. He smelled like Old Spice, the cheap stuff with the boat on the package. It seemed an innocent enough odour. Will edged away from Hannibal and tried to pay attention to the teacher.

Unfortunately the lecture was on cellular anatomy, something Will had already studied. Will took notes carefully anyways, always looking down.

Will couldn't stop himself from peeking occasionally at the strange boy next to him. During the whole class, he never relaxed his stiff position on the edge of his chair, sitting as far away from Will as possible. He could see Hannibal's hand on his left leg was clenched into a fist, tendons standing out under his pale skin. This, too, he never relaxed. Hannibal had the cuffs of his green button-up pushed slightly up his arms, and his forearm looked surprisingly hard and muscular beneath his light skin. He wasn't nearly as slight as he had looked from a distance in the cafeteria.

The class seemed to drag on longer than the others. Was it because the day was finally coming to a close, or because Will was waiting for Hannibal's tight fist to loosen? It never did; he continued to sit so still it looked like he wasn't breathing. What was wrong with him? Was this his normal behaviour? Will found himself questioning the designs he'd drawn up in his head about Hannibal from what Freddie had told him at lunch today. Maybe Freddie wasn't as bitter as he'd thought.

It couldn't have anything to do with Will. Hannibal didn't know Will from Adam.

At that moment, the bell rang loudly, making Will jump, and Hannibal Lecter was out of his seat. Fluidly he rose—he was taller than Will had thought—his back to Will, and he was out the door before anyone else was out of their seat.

Will sat frozen in his seat, staring blankly after him. Hannibal had been so rude. He began gathering his things slowly, trying to block the anger that filled him, for fear his eyes would tear up. For some reason, Will's temper was hard-wired to his tear ducts. He usually cried when he was angry, humiliating tendency.

"Aren't you William Graham?" a female voice asked.

Will looked up to see a pretty girl, her dark brunette hair carefully pulled back, smiling at Will in a friendly way. She obviously didn't think Will smelled bad.

"Will," he correct her, with a smile.

"I'm Alana Bloom."

"Hi, Alana."

"Do you need any help finding your next class?"

"I'm headed to the gym, actually. I think I can find it."

"That's my next class, too." She seemed thrilled, though it wasn't that big of a coincidence in a school this small.

They walked to class together; she was a chatterer—she supplied most of the conversation, which made it easy for Will. Alana had lived in Maryland till she was ten, so she knew how Will felt about that rain. It turned out she was in Will's English class too. She was the nicest person Will had met today.

But as they were entering the gym, she asked, "So, did you stab Hannibal Lecter with a pencil or what? I've never seen him act like that."

Will cringed. So he wasn't the only one had noticed. And, apparently, that *wasn't* Hannibal Lecter's usual behaviour. He decided to play dumb. "Was that the kid I sat next to in Biology?" he asked artlessly.

"Yes," she said. "He looked like he was in pain or something."

"I don't know," Will responded. "I never spoke to him."

"He's a weird guy. Definitely a loner. I sat next to him in Chemistry last year and he barely said one word to me, but he was smart. Perfect lab partner." Alana lingered by Will instead of heading to the dressing room. "If I were lucky enough to sit by you, I would have talked to you."

Will smiled at her before walking through the boys' locker room door. She was friendly and clearly admiring. But it wasn't enough to ease Will's irritation.

Open Book

Chapter Summary

> “To the contrary, good William, I find you very interesting to analyse.” Despite everything that they’d just said, Hannibal still sounded like he meant it.
> “So what do you see me as, then? When you’ve...psychoanalysed me.”
> “As the mongoose I want under my house when the snakes come around.” Hannibal smiled widely, flashing a set of perfect, ultra-white teeth.
> “Well, I don’t find you that interesting.”
> “You will.”

The next day was better....and worse.

It was better because it wasn’t raining yet, though the clouds were dense and opaque. It was easier because Will knew what to expect of my day. Alana came to sit by Will in English, and walked him to his next class, with chess club Franklyn glaring at her all the while; that was flattering. People didn’t look at Will quite as much as they had yesterday. He sat at a big group at lunch that included Alana, Franklyn, Freddie, Abigail, and several other people whose names and faces Will now remembered. He began to feel like he was treading water, instead of drowning in it.

It was worse because Will was tired; he still couldn’t sleep with the wind echoing around the house. It was harder because Mr. Varner called on Will in Trig when his hand wasn’t raised and Will had the wrong answer. It was miserable because Will had to play volleyball, and the one time he didn’t cringe out of the way of the ball, he hit his teammate in the head with it. And it was worse because Hannibal Lecter wasn’t in school at all.

All morning Will was dreading lunch, fearing his bizarre glares. Part of Will wanted to confront him and demand to know what his problem was. While he was lying sleepless in his bed, Will even imagined what he would say. But Will knew himself too well to think he would have the guts to do it. He made the Cowardly Lion look like the Terminator.

But when Will walked into the cafeteria with Abigail—trying to keep his eyes from sweeping the place for him, and failing entirely—Will saw that Hannibal’s table was empty, and there was no sign of Hannibal anywhere.

Alana intercepted them and steered them to her table. Abigail seemed elated by the attention, and her friends quickly joined them. But as Will tried to listen to their easy chatter, Will was terribly uncomfortable, waiting nervously for the moment when Hannibal would arrive.

Hannibal didn’t come, and as time passed, Will grew more and more tense.

Will walked to Biology with more confidence when, by the end of lunch, Hannibal still hadn't showed. Alana, who was taking on the qualities of a golden retriever, walked faithfully by Will's side to class. He held his breath at the door, but Hannibal Lecter wasn't there, either. Will exhaled and went to his seat. Alana followed, talking about an upcoming trip to the beach. She lingered by his desk until the bell rang. Then she smiled at him wistfully and went to sit by a girl with braces and a bad perm.

Will was relieved that he had the desk to himself, that Hannibal was absent. He told himself that repeatedly. But he couldn't get rid of the nagging suspicion that he was the reason Hannibal wasn't there. It was ridiculous, and egotistical, to think that he could affect anyone that strongly. And yet he couldn't stop worrying that it was true.

"Will?" Jack called out when he opened the door to the house.

"Welcome home," Will mumbled.

"Thanks." Jack hung up his gun belt and stepped out of his boots as Will began bustling about the kitchen. As far as Will was aware, Jack had never fired the gun on the job. But he kept it ready. When Will's dad had dumped him here as a child, Jack would always remove the bullets as soon as he walked in the door. Will guessed Jack considered him old enough now not to shoot himself by accident, and not the right kind of crazy to shoot himself on purpose.

"What's for dinner?" Jack asked warily. Will's father had been barely capable of microwaving a frozen dinner successfully, and Will hadn't had a chance to learn how to cook from his mother before she died. Will was surprised, and a little sad, that Jack seemed to remember that far back.

"Fish and potatoes," Will answered, and Jack looked relieved.

He seemed to feel awkward standing in the kitchen doing nothing; Jack lumbered into his bedroom to check on the still-sleeping Bella while Will worked. They were both more comfortable that way. Will made a salad while the fish sizzled in the pan, and set the table.

He called Jack in when dinner was ready, and Jack sniffed appreciatively as he walked into the room. "Smells good, Will."

"Thanks."

They ate in silence for a few minutes. It wasn't uncomfortable; neither of them was bothered by the quiet. In some ways, they were well suited for living together.

"So, how did you like school? Any friends?" Jack asked as he was taking seconds.

"I have a few classes with a girl named Freddie. I sit with her at lunch."

"Freddie Lounds?"

"Yeah."

Jack gave a non-committal grunt. “She’s got a tabloid blog, pretty popular one too. Likes to snoop around and start trouble. Be careful, Will.”

“I will. Uh, and there’s this girl, Alana, who’s pretty friendly. Everyone seems pretty nice.” With one outstanding exception.

“Must be Alana Bloom. Nice kid—nice family. Her dad owns the sporting goods store just outside of town. Makes a good living off of all the backpackers who come through here.”

“Do you know anything about the Lecters?” Will asked hesitantly.

“Robert Lecter and his nephew? Yeah. Hannibal’s a good kid.”

“Hannibal’s....a little different. He doesn’t seem to fit in too well at school.”

Jack surprised him by looking angry. “People in this town,” he muttered. “Hannibal Lecter left boarding school to come take care of his uncle personally. They’ve been nothing but generous to this town,” he continued, getting louder. “We’re lucky to have them—lucky that his uncle wanted to retire somewhere quiet and scenic. They’re an asset to this community, generous philanthropists, and Hannibal is well-behaved and polite. I had my doubts. I thought we might had some problems with them, you know, spoiled rich kid. But I haven’t had one speck of trouble from him. That’s more than I can say for the children of some of the people who have lived in this town for generations. They’ve stuck together the way a family should.”

It was the longest speech Will had ever heard Jack make. He must feel strongly about whatever people were saying.

Will backpedalled. “I just noticed he was kind of a loner. He’s very attractive,” he added, trying to be more complimentary.

Jack laughed, and they lapsed back into silence as they finished eating. Jack cleared the table and went back to tending to Bella while Will started on dishes.

That night it was finally quiet. Will fell asleep quickly, exhausted.

Hannibal Lecter didn’t come back to school.

Every day, Will watched anxiously for him during lunch until the late bell buzzed. Then he could relax and join in the lunchtime conversation. Mostly it centred around a trip to the La Push Ocean Park in two weeks that Alana was putting together. Will was invited, and agreed to go, more out of politeness than desire. Beaches reminded him too much of his dad.

Will walked alertly to the cafeteria with Freddie after French. Mushy snowballs were flying everywhere. Will kept his binder in his hands, ready to use it as a shield if necessary. Freddie thought it was hilarious, but something in Will’s expression kept her from taking a photo for her blog or lobbing a snowball at him herself.

Alana caught up to them as they walked in the cafeteria doors, laughing, with ice melting in the waves of her brown hair. She and Freddie were talking animatedly about the snow fight as they got in line to buy food. Will glanced toward Hannibal's table out of habit. And then he froze where he stood. Hannibal was sitting at it.

Freddie pulled on Will's arm. "Hello? Will? Have you finally snapped?"

Will looked down; his ears were hot. He had no reason to be self-conscious, he reminded himself. He hadn't done anything wrong.

"What's going on?" Alana questioned Freddie.

"Uh, nothing," Will answered. "I'll just get a soda today." He caught up to the end of the line.

"Aren't you hungry?" Alana asked.

"Actually, I , uh, feel a little sick," said Will, his eyes still on the floor.

He waited for them to get their food, and then followed Freddie to their table, Will's eyes on his feel.

Will sipped his soda slowly, his stomach churning. Twice Alana asked, with unnecessary concern, how he was feeling. He told her it was nothing, but he was wondering if he *should* play it up and escape to the nurse's office for the next house.

Ridiculous. He shouldn't have to run away. Will decided to permit himself one glance at Hannibal's table. If he was glaring at Will, Will would skip Biology, like the coward he was sure he was.

Will kept his head down and glanced up under his lashes. Hannibal wasn't looking this way. Will lifted his head a little.

Hannibal was laughing. A girl Will vaguely recognised as Bedelia Du Maurier—pale, but not as pale as Hannibal, golden blonde and pretty in a sophisticated kind of way—was sitting next to him. They both had their hair was entirely saturated with snow, and Hannibal was leaning away from her as she brushed snowflakes off of her violet trench coat into the air. They were enjoying the snowy day, just like everyone else—only they looked like a scene from a movie.

But there was something different about Hannibal, and Will couldn't quite pinpoint what that difference was. Hannibal's skin was less pale, Will decided—flushed from the cold, maybe—the circles under his eye much less noticeable. But there was something more. Will pondered, staring, trying to isolate the change.

"What are you staring at?" Freddie intruded, her eyes following Will's stare.

At that precise moment, Hannibal's eyes flashed over to meet Will's.

Will dropped his head, letting his bangs fall into his eyes. He was sure, though, in the instant their eyes met, that Hannibal didn't look harsh or unfriendly as he had the last time he'd seen

him. Hannibal looked merely curiously again, unsatisfied in some way.

“Hannibal Lecter is staring at you,” Freddie hissed into his ear.

“He doesn’t look angry, does he?” He couldn’t help asking.

“No,” she said, confused by the question. “Should he be? Well, Bedelia looks peeved, but she always looks like that.”

“I don’t think he likes me,” Will confided. He still felt queasy, so he laid his head down on his arm.

“Hannibal doesn’t like anyone except Bedelia and *sometimes* Abigail Hobbs. But he’s still staring at you.”

“Stop looking at him,” Will hissed.

Freddie snickered, but she looked away. Will raised his head enough to make sure that she did, contemplating stealing her laptop if she resisted.

Alana interrupted them then—she was planning an epic battle of the blizzard in the parking lot after school and wanted them to join. Freddie agreed to join, but Will kept silent. He’d have to hide in the gym until the parking lot cleared.

When Will finally got inside the Biology room, he saw with relief that his table was still empty. Mr. Banner was walking around the room, distributing one microscope and a box of slides to each table. Class didn’t start for a few minutes, and the room buzzed with conversation. Will kept his eyes away from the door, doodling idly on the cover of his notebook.

He heard very clearly when the chair next to him moved, but his eyes stayed very carefully focused on the pattern he was drawing.

“Hello,” said a quiet, heavily-accented voice.

Will looked up, stunned that Hannibal was speaking to him. Hannibal was sitting as far away from him as the desk allowed, but his chair was angled towards Will. Hannibal’s dazzling face was friendly, open, a slight smile on his flawless lips. But his eyes were careful.

“I am Hannibal Lecter,” he continued. “I did not have a chance to introduce myself last week, and that was terribly rude of me. You must be Will Graham.”

Will’s mind was spinning. Had he made up the whole thing? Hannibal was perfectly polite now. He had to speak; Hannibal was waiting. But Will couldn’t think of anything conventional to say.

“How do you know my name?” Will stammered.

Hannibal laughed a soft, enchanting laugh. “Oh, I believe everyone knows your name. The whole town has been waiting for you to arrive.”

Will grimaced. He’d known it was something like that. “No,” he persisted stupidly. “I meant, why did you call me Will?”

He seemed confused. “Do you prefer William?”

“No, I like Will,” he said. “But I think Jack—I mean, uh, Sheriff Crawford—must call me William behind my back—it’s what everyone here seems to know me as,” Will tried to explain, feeling like an utter moron.

Thankfully, Mr. Banner started class at that moment. Will tried to concentrate as he explained the lab they’d be doing today, and he and Hannibal worked silently in tandem.

They were finished before anyone else was close. Will could see Alana and his partner comparing slides again and again, and another group had their book open under the table.

Which left Will with nothing to do but try to not look at Hannibal....unsuccessfully. Will glanced up, and Hannibal was staring at him, that same inexplicable look of frustration in his eyes. Suddenly Will identified that subtle difference in his face.

“Did you get contact?” Will blurted out unthinkingly.

Hannibal seemed puzzled by the question. “No.”

“Oh,” Will mumbled. “I thought there was something different about your eyes.”

He shrugged, and looked away.

In fact, Will was sure there was something different. He vividly remembered the flat, red-rimmed black colour of Hannibal’s eye the last time he’d glared at Will—the colour was striking against the background of his pale skin and his ash hair. Today, his eyes were a completely different colour: a strange brown, tinged with red, almost maroon. Will didn’t understand how that could be, unless Hannibal was lying for some reason about the contacts. Or maybe Freddie had been right, and Will’s mind had finally snapped under the stress.

Will looked down. Hannibal’s hands were clenched into hard fists again.

Mr. Banner came to their table then, to see why they weren’t working. He looked other their shoulders to glance at the completed lab, and then stared more intently to check the answers written in Hannibal’s distinctive copperplate.

“So, Hannibal, didn’t you think William should get a chance with the microscope?” Mr. Banner asked.

“Will,” Hannibal corrected automatically. “Actually, he identified three of the five stages.”

Mr. Banner looked at Will now; his expression was sceptical now. “Have you done this lab before?” he asked.

Will smiled sheepishly. “No, not with onion root.”

“Whitefish blastula?”

Mr. Banner nodded. “Were you in an advanced program in Louisiana?”

“No.”

“Well,” Mr. Banner said after a moment. “I guess it’s good you two are lab partners.” He mumbled something else as he walked away.

“It is too bad about the snow, is it not?” Hannibal asked. Will had the feeling he was forcing himself to make small talk. Paranoia swept over Will again. It was like he had heard Will’s conversation with Freddie at lunch and was trying to prove Will wrong.

“Not really,” Will answered honestly, instead of pretending to be normal like everyone else. He was still trying to dislodge the stupid feeling of suspicion, and he couldn’t concentrate.

“You do not like the cold.” It wasn’t a question.

“Or the wet.”

“Forks must be a difficult place for you to live,” Hannibal mused.

“You have no idea,” Will muttered darkly.

Hannibal looked fascinated by what Will said, for some reason Will couldn’t imagine. His face was such a distraction Will tried not to look at it any more than courtesy demanded, even under Will’s already impressive hatred of eye contact with people of any sort.

“Why did you come here, then?”

No one had ever asked Will that—not straight out like he did, demanding.

“It’s....complicated.”

“I think I can keep up,” he pressed.

Will paused for a long moment, and then made the mistake of meeting Hannibal’s gaze. His maroon eyes confused Will and he answered without thinking.

“My dad died,” Will said.

“That does not sound so complex,” he disagreed, but he was suddenly sympathetic-sounding. “When did that happen?”

“Last November.” Will’s voice sounded sad, even to himself.

“And Jack Crawford is a relative of yours, so you were sent Forks?” Hannibal surmised, his tone still understanding.

“No, Jack is just a friend of my dad’s.”

“How did they meet? Do you have any other relatives?”

Will couldn’t fathom Hannibal’s interest, but Hannibal continued to stare at him with penetrating eyes, as if his dull life story was somehow vitally important.

“My dad—he fixed boats. We moved a lot, my dad is kind of a drifter. He used to leave me with Jack and his wife sometimes, when he couldn’t take me with him to work. Jack and my dad were in the Army together.” Will half-smiles.

“And your father left you in the custody of Sheriff Crawford, so you were sent here.” He said it as an assumption again, not a question.

Will’s chin raised a fraction. “No, he didn’t send me anywhere. I sent myself.”

Hannibal’s eyebrows knit together. “I do not understand,” he admitted, and he seemed unnecessarily frustrated by that fact.

Will sighed. Why was he explaining this to him? Hannibal continued to stare at him with obvious curiosity.

“I stayed with my mother at first, but she left my dad and I behind a few months after I was born. It made her unhappy.... Jack had offered at the funeral to take me in, so I decided it was time to go.” Will’s voice was glum by the time he finished.

“But now you are unhappy,” Hannibal pointed out.

“And?” Will challenged.

“That does not seem fair.” Hannibal shrugged, but his eyes were still intense.

Will laughed without humour. “Hasn’t anyone ever told you? Life isn’t fair.”

“I believe I have heard that somewhere before,” he agreed dryly.

“So, that’s all,” Will insisted, wondering why Hannibal was still staring at him that way.

His gaze became appraising. “You give a grand performance, Will,” he said slowly. “But I would be willing to bet that you are suffering more than you let anyone see.”

Will grimaced at him, resisting the impulse to stick out his tongue like a five year old, and looked away.

“Am I wrong?”

Will tried to ignore Hannibal.

“I do not imagine so,” Hannibal murmured smugly.

“Are you trying to *psychoanalyse* me?” asked Will, irritated. He kept his eyes away, watching the teacher make his rounds.

“That is a very good question,” he muttered, so quietly that Will wondered if he was talking to himself. However, after a few seconds of silence, Will decided it was the only answer he was going to get. He sighed, scowling at the blackboard.

“Am I annoying you?” Hannibal asked. He sounded amused.

Will glanced at him without thinking....and told the truth again. “Not exactly. Just... I hate being psychoanalysed like that. Don’t psychoanalyse me. You wouldn’t like me when I’m psychoanalysed.”

“To the contrary, good William, I find you very interesting to analyse.” Despite everything that they’d just said, Hannibal still sounded like he meant it.

“So what do you see me as, then? When you’ve...psychoanalysed me.”

“As the mongoose I want under my house when the snakes come around.” Hannibal smiled widely, flashing a set of perfect, ultra-white teeth.

“Well, I don’t find you that interesting.”

“You will.”

Invitations

Chapter Summary

Will saw several things simultaneously. Nothing was moving in slow motion, the way it did in movies. Instead, the adrenaline rush seemed to make his brain work much faster, and he was able to absorb in clear detail several things at once. Hannibal Lecter was standing four cars down from Will, staring at him in horror. But of more immediate importance was the dark blue van that was skidding, tires locked and squealing against the brakes, spinning wildly across the ice of the parking lot. It was going to hit the back corner of Will's truck, and Will was standing right between them. He didn't even have time to close his eyes.

The moment Will got out of his truck at school, he heard an odd sound.

It was a high-pitched screech, and it was quickly becoming painfully loud. He looked up, startled.

Will saw several things simultaneously. Nothing was moving in slow motion, the way it did in movies. Instead, the adrenaline rush seemed to make his brain work much faster, and he was able to absorb in clear detail several things at once.

Hannibal Lecter was standing four cars down from Will, staring at him in horror. His face stood out from a sea of faces, all frozen in the same mask of shock. But of more immediate importance was the dark blue van that was skidding, tires locked and squealing against the brakes, spinning wildly across the ice of the parking lot. It was going to hit the back corner of Will's truck, and Will was standing right between them. He didn't even have time to close his eyes.

Just before Will could hear the shattering crunch of the van folding around the truck bed, something hit him, hard, but not from the direction he was expecting. His head cracked against the icy blacktop, and he felt something solid and cold pinning him to the ground. He was lying on the pavement behind the tan car he'd parked next to. But Will didn't have a chance to notice anything else, because the van was still coming. It had curled gratingly around the end of the truck and, still spinning and sliding, was about to collide with him again.

A low oath made Will aware that someone was with him, and that accent was impossible not to recognise. Two long, white hands shot out protectively in front of Will, and the van shuddered to a stop a foot from Will's face, the large hands fitting providentially into a deep blue dent in the side of the van's body.

Then the hands moved so fast they blurred. One was suddenly gripping under the body of the van, and something was dragging Will, swinging his legs around like a rag doll's, till they hit the tire of the tan car. A groaning metallic thud hurt his ears, and the van settled, glass popping, onto the asphalt—exactly where, a second ago, Will's legs had been.

It was absolutely silent for one long second before the screaming again. In the abrupt bedlam, Will could hear more than one person shouting his name. But more clearly than all the yelling, Will could head Hannibal Lecter's low, frantic voice in his ear.

"Will? Are you alright?"

"I'm fine." Will's voice sounded strange. He tried to sit up, and realised Hannibal was holding him against the side of his body in an iron grasp.

"Be careful," Hannibal warned as Will struggled. "I believe you may have suffered head trauma."

Will became aware of a throbbing ache centred about his left ear. "Ow," he said, surprised.

"That is what I thought." Hannibal's voice, amazingly, sounded like he was suppressing laughter.

"How the hell—" Will trailed off, trying to clear his head, get his bearings. "How did you get over here so fast?"

"I was standing right next to you, Will," he said, his tone serious again.

Will turned to sit up, and this time, Hannibal let him, releasing his hold around his waist and sliding as far from Will as he could in the limited space. Will was looking at his concerned, innocent expression and was disoriented again by the force of Hannibal's maroon eyes. What had he been asking him?

And then they found them, a crowd of people with tears streaming down their faces, shouting at each other, shouting at them.

"Don't move," someone instructed.

"Get Eldon out of the van!" someone else shouted.

There was a flurry of activity about Hannibal and Will. Will tried to get up, but Hannibal's cold hand pushed his shoulder down.

"Just stay put for now, Will."

"But it's cold," Will complained. It surprised him when Hannibal chuckled under his breath. There was an edge to the sound.

"You were over there," Will suddenly remembered, and his chuckle stopped short. "You were by your car."

Hannibal's expression turned hard. "No, I was not."

"I saw you." All around them was chaos. Will could hear the gruffer voices of adults arriving on the scene, but he obstinately held on to their argument; he was right, and Hannibal was going to admit it.

"Will, I was standing with you, and I pulled you out of the way." Hannibal unleashed the full power of his eyes of him, as if trying to communicate something crucial.

"No." Will set his jaw.

The red in Hannibal's eyes blazed. "Please, William."

"Why?"

"Trust me," Hannibal pleased, his soft voice overwhelming.

Will could hear the sirens now. "Will you explain everything to me later?"

"Fine," he snapped, abruptly exasperated.

It took six EMTs to move the van enough to get the stretchers in. Hannibal vehemently refused his, and Will tried to do the same, but the traitor told them Will had hit his head and probably had a concussion. It looked like the entire school was there, watching soberly as they loaded Will in the back of the ambulance while Hannibal got to ride like a regular passenger. Will found it maddening.

To make matters worse, Jack arrived before they could safely get Will away.

"Will!" he yelled in panic when he recognised the body on the stretcher.

"I'm fine, Jack," Will sighed. "There is nothing wrong with me."

"He may have a concussion," Hannibal interrupted, explaining things in a jumble of medical terms Will didn't know at all. Will tuned them both out to consider the jumble of inexplicable images in his head, closing his eyes to the swinging of an imaginary pendulum.

When they'd lifted him from the car, he'd seen the deep dent in the tan car's bumper—a very distinct dent that matched the contours of Hannibal's shoulders....as if he'd braced himself against the car with enough force to damage the metal frame.

And then there was Bedelia Du Maurier, looking on from the distance, expression as dour as ever but holding no hint of concern for Hannibal's safety.

Will tried to think of the design behind what he'd just seen—a solution that excluded the assumption that he'd finally gone insane.

Will decided he might as well go to bed early that night. Jack continued to watch him even more anxiously that he watched over Bella, and it was getting on Will's nerves. He stopped

on his way to grab three Tylenol from the bathroom. They did help his headache, and as the pain eased, Will drifted to sleep.

That was the first night he dreamed of Hannibal Lecter.

In Will's dream he was walking along a forested stretch of road, in the near-pitch darkness of night. What dim light there was seemed to be radiating from Hannibal, who was walking beside an inky stag just a few steps ahead of Will, leaving Will in the blackness, but no matter how fast he ran he couldn't catch up to Hannibal and the stag. No matter how loud Will called, he never turned. Troubled, Will woke in the middle of the night, drenched in sweat, and couldn't sleep again that night.

After that, Hannibal and the stag were in his dreams nearly every night, but always on the periphery, never within Will's reach.

The month that followed the accident was uneasy, tense, and, at first, embarrassing. To Will's dismay, he found himself the centre of attention for the rest of the week.

Eldon Stammets was impossible, following him around, obsessed with trying to make amends to Will somehow. Will tried to convince him that what he wanted more than anything was for him to forget about it—especially since nothing had actually happened to Will—but Eldon remained insistent. He followed Will between classes and sat at their now-crowded lunch table.

No one seemed concerned about Hannibal, though Will explained over and over that Hannibal was the hero—how he'd pulled Will out of the way and had nearly been crushed, too. Will tried to be convincing. Alana, Freddie, Franklyn, and everyone else commented that they hadn't even seen him there till the van was pulled away.

Hannibal was never surrounded by crowds of curious bystanders eager for his firsthand account. People avoided him as usual. As usual, Bedelia would sit with him, if she ate in the cafeteria, and once Abigail Hobbs sat with him, but they acted the same as usual, talking only amongst themselves, Hannibal never eating. None of them, even Hannibal, looked Will's way anymore.

When Hannibal set next to him in class, as far away from Will as the table would allow, he seemed totally unaware of Will's presence. Only now and then, when his fists would suddenly ball up, did Will wonder if Hannibal wasn't quite as oblivious as he appeared.

Hannibal wished he hadn't pulled Will from the path of Eldon's van—there was no other conclusion Will could come to.

It didn't stop Will from dreaming about him.

When the bell rang for the end of Biology, Will turned his back to Hannibal to gather his things, expecting Hannibal to leave immediately as usual.

“Will?” His voice shouldn’t have been so familiar to Will, as if he’d known the sound of it his entire life rather than for just a few short weeks.

Will turned slowly, unwillingly. He didn’t want to feel what he *knew* he *would* feel when he looked at Hannibal’s too-perfect face. Will’s expression was wary when he finally turned to him; Hannibal’s expression was unreadable. “Oh, are you speaking to me again?” Will finally asked, an unintentional note of petulance in his voice.

Hannibal’s lips twitched, fighting a smile. “Not entirely, no.”

Will closed his eyes and inhaled slowly through his nose, aware that he was gritting his teeth. Hannibal waited.

“Then what do you want, Hannibal?” he asked, keeping his eyes closed; Will always had found it easier to talk to people with the complications of eye contact.

“I am sorry.” Hannibal sounded sincere. “I have been terribly rude to you, and I know I would find such rudeness intolerable in another person. But you must know that it is better this way, truly.”

Will opened his eyes. Hannibal’s face was serious. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“It is better if we are not friends,” he explained. “Please trust me.”

Will’s eyes narrowed. He’s heard *that* before. “Too bad you didn’t figure that out earlier. You could’ve saved yourself all this regret.”

“Regret?” The word, and Will’s tone, obviously caught Hannibal off-guard. “Regret for what?”

“For not letting Eldon squash me.”

Hannibal was astonished, staring at him in disbelief. When he finally spoke, he almost sounded angry. “You believe I regret saving your life?”

“I *know* you do,” Will snapped.

“You know nothing.” Hannibal was definitely angry.

Will turned his head sharply away from him, clenching his jaw against all the wild accusations that he wanted to hurl at Hannibal. He gathered his books, then stood and walked to the door. Will meant to storm dramatically out of the doom, but the toe of his boot caught the door jamb, and he dropped his books. He stood there for a moment, thinking of just leaving them, before sighing and bending over to pick them up.

Hannibal was there instantly; he’d already stacked them into a pile. He handed them to Will, his face hard.

“Thank you,” Will said icily.

Hannibal's eyes narrowed. "You are welcome."

The next morning, when Will pulled into the parking lot, he deliberately parked as far from Hannibal's Bentley. He didn't want to put himself in the path of too much temptation and end up giving Freddie Lounds a new story while owning Hannibal a new car. Getting out of the cab, Will fumbled with his keys and it fell into a puddle at his feet. As he bent to get it, a white hand flashed out in front of Will and grabbed it before he could. Hannibal Lecter was right next to him, leaning casually against Will's truck.

"How do you *do* that?" Will asked in begrudging amazement.

"Do what, good Will?" He held Will's key out as he spoke, dropping it into Will's palm.

"Appear out of thin air."

"Will, it is not my fault that you are particular unobservant." Hannibal's voice was quiet as usual—velvet, muted.

Will scowled at him. Hannibal's eyes were light again today, a deep ruby-flecked burgundy. Then he forced himself to look down, to reassemble his now-tangled thoughts.

"Are you trying to irritate me to death, or are you still pretending I don't exist?"

"I am not pretending you do not exist."

"So you *are* trying to irritate me to death? Since Eldon's van didn't do the job?"

Anger flashed in Hannibal's maroon eyes. His lips pressed into a hard line, all signs of humour gone. "You are behaving absurdly," he said, his low voice cold.

Will's palms tingled—he wanted so badly to hit something. He was surprised at himself—he was usually a nonviolent person. He turned his back and started to walk away.

"Wait," Hannibal called. Will kept walking, sloshing angrily through the rain. But Hannibal was next to him, easily keeping pace.

"I am very sorry. I have been very rude," said Hannibal as they walked. Will ignored him. "I am not saying it is not untrue, but it was rude to say it, at any rate."

"Why won't you just leave me alone?" Will grumbled.

"I wanted to ask you something, but you....distracted me," he chuckled. Hannibal seemed to have recovered his good humour.

"Do you have a multiple personality disorder?" Will asked severely.

"You are distracting me again."

Will sighed. "Fine. What do you want?"

“I was curious if, a week from Saturday—you may know it as the date of the spring dance—”

“Are you trying to be *funny*?” Will interrupted him, wheeling towards Hannibal.

Hannibal’s eyes were wickedly amused. “Would you allow me to finish my sentence, Will?”

Will bit his lip and clasped his hands together , so he couldn’t do anything rash.

“I heard you tell Alana you were going to Seattle that day, and I was wondering if you would like a ride.”

That was unexpected.

“What?” Will wasn’t sure what Hannibal was getting at.

“Do you want a ride to Seattle?”

“With who?”

“Myself, obviously.” Hannibal enunciated every syllable, as if he were having a hard time speaking in English.

Will was still stunned. “Why?”

“I was planning to go to Seattle in the next few weeks, and frankly, Will, I am not certain your truck can make the journey safely.”

“My truck works just fine, thanks.” Will started to walk again, but he was too surprised to maintain the same level of anger.

“But can your truck make it there on one tank of gas?”

“I don’t see how any of this is your business.” Stupid, shiny Bentley owner.

“The wasting of finite natural resources is the business of all.”

“Really, Hannibal.” Will felt a thrill go through himself as he said his name, and Will hated himself for it. “I can’t keep up with you. I thought we couldn’t be friends.”

“I said it would be better if we were not friends, not that I do not wish to be.”

“Well, thank you for clearing that right up.” Heavy sarcasm. Will realised he’d stopped walking again. They were under the shelter of the cafeteria roof now, so Will could more easily look at Hannibal’s face, which certain didn’t help the clarity of his thoughts.

“It would be more....*prudent* if we were not friends,” Hannibal explained. “But for the first time in a very long time, I see in you the possibility of friendship, Will.”

His eyes were gloriously intense as he uttered that last sentence, his eyes smouldering. Will almost forgot how to breathe.

“Will you accompany me to Seattle?” Hannibal asked again, still intense.

Will couldn’t speak yet, so he just nodded.

Hannibal smiled briefly, and then his face became serious. “You really would do better to stay away from me,” he warned. “I shall see you in class.”

He turned abruptly and walked back the way they’d come.

Blood Type

Chapter Summary

> "I am tired of trying to keep myself away from you, Will. So I am surrendering to my desires." Hannibal was still smiling, but his eyes were serious.
> "Surrendering?" repeated Will in confusion.
> "Yes. I have tried to do the proper thing and resist this opportunity, but it is evident to me that you have no regard for my best-laid plans. So I am going to do what I want now, and let the chips fall where they may." His smile faded as he explained, and a hard edge crept into his voice.
> "Do you a fetish for confusing metaphors or what?"

"Hannibal Lecter is staring at you again," Freddie said, finally breaking through Will's distracted silence with the mention of Hannibal. "He's alone again today."

Will's head snapped up. He followed her gaze to see Hannibal, smiling, staring at Will from his usual empty table. Once Hannibal had caught Will's eye, he raised one hand and motioned with his index finger for Will to join him. As Will stared in disbelief, Hannibal's smile grew.

"Does he mean *you*?" Freddie asked with insulting astonishment in her voice.

"Maybe he needs help with his Biology homework," Will muttered for her benefit, gathering his things. "Uh, I'll go see what he wants."

Will could see Freddie's upcoming blog post as he walked away.

When he reached Hannibal's table, he stood behind the chair across from him, unsure.

"Sit with me, Will. Please," Hannibal invited, still smiling.

Will sat down automatically, watching him with caution. Hannibal seemed to be waiting for Will to say something.

"This is....different," Will finally managed.

"Well...." Hannibal paused, and then the rest of his words followed in a rush. "I decided that as long as I going to be doomed to hell, I might as well enjoy myself thoroughly."

Will waited for him to say something that made any sense at all. The seconds ticked by. "You do know I have no goddamned idea what you mean by that, right?"

“I am aware.” Hannibal smiled again, and then changed the subject. “I believe your friends are angry with me for stealing you, Will.”

“They’ll survive.” Will could feel their stares boring holes into his back.

“I may not give you back, though,” said Hannibal with a wicked glint in his eyes.

Will gulped.

“You look worried,” Hannibal laughed.

“No,” Will said, but, ridiculously, his voice broke. “Just....surprised, actually. What brought this on?”

“I told you—I am tired of trying to keep myself away from you, Will. So I am surrendering to my desires.” Hannibal was still smiling, but his eyes were serious.

“Surrendering?” repeated Will in confusion.

“Yes. I have tried to do the proper thing and resist this opportunity, but it is evident to me that you have no regard for my best-laid plans. So I am going to do what I want now, and let the chips fall where they may.” His smile faded as he explained, and a hard edge crept into his voice.

“Do you a fetish for confusing metaphors or what?”

The breathtaking smile reappeared. “I always say too much when I am talking to you—that is one of my problems.”

“Oh, don’t worry. I’m still trying to figure out that one about me being a mongoose,” Will said wryly.

“I am counting on that.”

“So, in plain English, are we friends now?”

“Friends....” Hannibal mused, dubious.

“Or not,” Will muttered.

Hannibal grinned. “We may try, I suppose. But I must warn you that I am not a good friend for you, Will.” Behind his smile, the warning was real.

“You say that a lot,” Will noted, trying to ignore the sudden fear and the tremble in his voice.

“You have not listened to me yet. I am still waiting for you to understand it.”

“So, if I don’t listen to you, we’ll try to be friends?” Will struggled to sum up the confusing exchange.

“That sounds correct.”

Will looked down at his hands wrapped around his lemonade bottle, not sure what to do now.

“What are you thinking, Will?” Hannibal asked curiously.

“I’m trying to figure out what you are. What your design is.”

Hannibal’s jaw tightened, but he kept his smile in place with some effort. “Are you having any luck with that?” he asked in an offhand tone.

“Not too much,” Will admitted.

Hannibal chuckled. “What are your theories?”

Will had been vacillating during the last month between Bruce Banner and Bruce Wayne, but there was no way he was going to own up to that.

“Do you not desire to tell me?” Hannibal asked, tilting his head to one side with a shockingly tempting smile.

Will shook his head. “Normally I have no problem getting inside anyone else’s head, you know.”

“You are very frustrating, you know,” Hannibal complained.

“No,” Will disagreed quickly, his eyes narrowing. “I cannot *imagine* why being evasive would be frustrating at all—just because someone refused to tell you what they’re thinking, even while they’re making cryptic little remarks specifically designed to keep you up at night wondering what the hell they could possibly mean.... Now, what’s so frustrating about that?”

Hannibal grimaced.

“Or better,” Will continued, the pent-up annoyance flowing freely now, “say that person also did a wide range of completely bizarre things—saving your life under completely impossible circumstances one day and treating you like a leper the next—and he never explained any of that, either, even after he said he would. I can’t imagine that that would be frustrating, either.”

“You have quite a temper, do you not?”

“I really hate double-standards.”

They stared at each other, unsmiling.

Hannibal glanced over Will’s shoulder, and then, unexpectedly, snickered.

“What?”

“Your girlfriend Alana seems to think I am being unpleasant to you. I imagine she is debating whether or not to break up the fight. Freddie appears to be trying to film this.”

Will had to look away from the intensity of Hannibal's stared. He concentrated on unscrewing the lid of his lemonade and took a swig, staring at the table without seeing it.

"Are you not hungry, Will?" Hannibal asked, distracted.

"No." Will didn't feel like mentioning that his stomach was already full from nausea. "You?"

"No, I am not." Will didn't understand Hannibal's expression—it looked like he was enjoying some private joke.

"Can you do me a favour?" Will asked after a moment of hesitation.

Hannibal was suddenly wary. "That depends on what you want."

"It's not much," Will assured him.

Hannibal waited, guarded but curious.

"Could you warn me next time you decide to ignore me for my own good? Just so I'm prepared?" Will looked at his lemonade as he spoke, tracing the circling of the opening with his pinkie finger.

"That sounds fair." Hannibal was pressing his lips together to keep from laughing when Will looked up.

"Thanks."

"Now can I have an answer in return?" Hannibal asked.

"One."

"Tell me one of your theories."

Whoops. "Not that."

"You did not qualify, you merely promised me one answer," Hannibal reminded him.

"And you've broken promises yourself," Will reminded him back.

"*Quid pro quo*, William. I did something for you. Now you will answer my question. I promise I will not laugh."

"You will." Will was positive about that.

"Please?" Hannibal breathed, leaning towards Will.

Will blinked, his mind going blank. Holy crap, how did he *do* that? "What?"

"Please tell me one of your theories."

“Uh, you turn into a big green rage monster sometimes.” Was Hannibal a hypnotist too? Or had Will somehow become a hopeless pushover?

“Creative,” Hannibal scoffed.

“That’s all I got.”

“You are nowhere close.” Hannibal’s tone was teasing.

“No serious anger management issues?”

“None.”

“Not secretly the defender of Gotham, either?”

“No.”

“Damn,” Will sighed. “I’ll figure it out eventually.”

“I wish you would not try.” Hannibal was serious again.

“Because....?”

“What if I am not a superhero, Will? What if I am the villain?” Hannibal’s eyes were impenetrable again.

“Oh,” Will said, as several things he’d hinted at suddenly fell into place. “I see you now.”

“Do you?” Hannibal looked as if he were afraid he’d accidentally said too much.

“You’re dangerous?” Will guessed, his pulse quickening as he intuitively realised the truth of his own words. Hannibal *was* dangerous. He’d been trying to tell Will that all alone.

Hannibal just looked at Will, eyes full of some emotion Will couldn’t comprehend.

“But not bad,” whispered Will, shaking his head. “You’re not the villain.”

“You’re wrong.” Hannibal’s voice was almost inaudible. Will stared at him, wondering why he didn’t feel afraid. Hannibal meant what he was saying—that much was obvious. But Will just felt anxious, on edge....and more than anything else, fascinated. The same way Hannibal had told him he’d find him from the beginning.

The silence lasted until Will noticed that the cafeteria was almost empty. Will jumped to his feet. “We’re going to be late.”

“I am not attending class today.”

“Why not?”

“It is healthy to miss a class every now and then.” Hannibal smiled up at Will, but his eyes were still dark.

“Well, I’m going.” Will wasn’t going to risk getting caught.

Hannibal turned his attention back to that damned invisible point of focus on the wall.

Will almost hesitated, torn, but then the first bell sent him hurrying out the door.

“Oh dear,” the grandmotherly nurse said cheerfully. “Blood typing in Biology get you?”

Will nodded weakly, clutching at the wall.

The nurse nodded sagely. “There’s always one.”

“I know,” Will sighed. His nausea and headache were already fading now that he was out of the classroom and had swallowed the aspirin he kept in his pocket for an emergency.

“Does this happen a lot?” she asked, after a long moment of quiet.

“Sometimes,” admitted Will. He was almost fine now, though the queasiness would probably have passed faster if he’d eaten something for lunch. On the other hand, maybe it was lucky his stomach was empty.

“You look better already.”

“I think I’m fine,” Will said quickly. There was just a little ringing in his ears, no spinning. The mint green walls stayed where they should.

He could see that the nurse was about to make him lie back down, but the door opened just then, and Hannibal staggered in, a sallow-looking Alana in his arms. Will drew back against the wall to give them room.

"She fell unconscious on her way here," Hannibal explained briskly. “Get out of the office, Will,” he muttered, dropping Alana onto the cot.

Will looked up at him, bewildered.

“Trust me—go.”

He spun and caught the office door before it closed, darting out of the nurse’s office. He could feel Hannibal right behind him.

“You actually listened to me.” Hannibal was stunned.

“I smelled the blood,” Will said, wrinkling his nose. Alana wasn’t sick from watching other people, unlike him.

“People cannot smell blood,” he contradicted.

“Well, I can—that’s what made me sick. It smells like.... rust and salt.”

Hannibal was staring at Will with an unfathomable expression.

“What?” asked Will.

“Nothing. Nothing. Are you returning to class, Will?"

“Well, I have to go to Gym—”

“I can take of that.” Will hadn’t noticed they had arrived at the main office until Hannibal was opening the door and sliding in, leaving Will to stand outside and wait for a minute or two.

“We are free to leave,” Hannibal said, smiling, leading the way to the parking lot.

“Thanks. Almost worth getting sick just to miss Gym.”

“Anytime.” Hannibal was staring straight forward, squinting into the rain.

“Alana reminded me—Are you going? To the beach this Saturday, I mean, with Alana and everyone.” Will was hoping Hannibal would, though it seemed unlikely. He couldn’t picture Hannibal carpooling with the rest of the kids from school; he didn’t belong in the same world.

“Where are you all doing, exactly?”

“Down to La Push, to First Beach.” Will studied his face, trying to read it.

Hannibal’s eyes seemed to narrow infinitesimally before he glanced down at Will. “I do not think I was invited.”

Will sighed. “I just invited you.”

“I do not believe my company would be appreciate by your friends.”

They were near the parking lot now. Will veered left, towards his truck. Something grabbed at his jacket and yanked him backwards.

“Where are you doing?” Hannibal asked. He was gripping a fistful of Will’s jacket in one hand.

Will was confused. “Home?”

“I promised to take you safely home. I will not let you drive in your condition.” Hannibal’s voice was indignant.

“My *condition*? What condition? And what about my truck?”

“I will drop it off after school.” He was towing Will towards his car now, pulling him by his jacket. It was all Will could do to keep from falling backwards, though he suspected Hannibal would just drag him along if he did.

“This is completely unnecessary,” Will grumbled. He stood by the passenger side door to the Bentley, fuming.

“The door is unlocked,” was all Hannibal responded with, getting in to his car. “Get in, Will.”

Will didn’t answer. He was mentally calculating his chances of reaching his truck before Hannibal could catch him. He had to admit, they weren’t good.

He tried to maintain what dignity he could as he got inside Hannibal’s car. Will wasn’t very successful—he looked like a half-drowned cat from the rain and his boots squeaked.

As Hannibal pulled out of the parking lot, Will was preparing to give him the silent treatment —but then Will recognised the music that Hannibal was playing, and his curiosity got the better of his intentions.

“The Goldberg Variations?”

“You know Bach?” Hannibal sounded surprised.

“Not well,” Will admitted. “Jack likes to play it around the house, says it helps Bella sleep—I only know my favourites.”

“This is one of my favourites, too.” Hannibal stared out through the rain, lost in thought.

Will listened to the music, relaxing against the light grey leather seats. It was impossible not to respond to the familiar, soothing melody. The rain blurred everything outside the window into gray and green smudges.

“What was your father like?” Hannibal asked him suddenly.

“He looked a lot like me,” started Will. “He taught me how to fish, how to fix boats. I used to help him. He was irresponsible and drank too much and moved us around every few months and a terrible cook, but he was my friend.” He stopped. Talking about his father always made him depressed.

“How old are you, Will?” Hannibal stopped the car, and Will realised they were at Jack’s house already. The rain was so heavy that Will could barely see the house at all. It was like the car was submerged under a river.

“I’m seventeen,” Will responded, a little confused.

“You don’t seem seventeen.” Hannibal’s tone was reproachful; it made Will laugh. “What?” he asked, curious again

“My father told me I was born thirty-five years old and that I got more middle-aged every day.” Will laughed, and then sighed. “Someone had to be the adult.” He paused for a second. “You don’t seem like a junior in high school yourself.”

Hannibal made a strange face and changed the subject. “Why do you think your mother was unhappy in your company?”

Will was surprised he would remember all that from just one mention, almost two months ago. It took him a moment to answer.

“My mother...she’d moved on from my dad and me. She remarried. I think I reminded her too much of her old life. Anyways, she hadn’t seen me since I was a baby. We were like strangers.” Will shook his head. He’d felt like an intruder in his mother’s life.

“So you decided to live with Jack Crawford to make a virtual stranger happier?”

“Does that really matter?” Will countered. “I felt like I was a burden, so I left. I wanted her to be happy.”

“That is very generous.... I wonder,” mused Hannibal.

“What?”

“Did you tell Jack any of this?”

“No.”

“You are selfless to a fault, Will. You respected the choices that made your mother happy. Would she, or even Jack, extend the same courtesies to you as you extended to him?” Hannibal was suddenly intense, his eyes searching Will’s.

“I-I think so,” Will stuttered. “But he’s my guardian, that’s different.”

“No matter what your choice was?”

“Probably?”

“No one too scary, then,” Hannibal teased.

Will grinned a little in response. “What do you mean by scary? Piercings and tattoos?”

“That is one definition, I suppose.”

“What’s your definition?”

But Hannibal ignored his question and asked him another. “Do you think that *I* could be frightening?” He raised one pale eyebrow, and the faint trace of a smile lightened his face.

Will thought for a moment, wondering if the truth or a lie would go over better. He decided to go with the truth. “I think you *could* be, if you wanted to be.”

“Are you frightened of me now?” The smile vanished.

“No.” But Will answered too quickly. “So, are you going to tell me about your family?” Will asked to distract him. “It’s got to be a much more interesting story than mine.”

Hannibal was instantly cautious. “What do you wish to know?”

“Your uncle adopted you?”

“Yes.”

Will hesitated for a moment. “What happened to your parents?”

“They died many years ago.” His tone was matter-of-fact.

“I’m sorry.”

“I was young when they died. I do not remember them that clearly. It is my younger sister that I miss the most.”

“You and your sister were close.” It wasn’t a question. It was obvious in the way Hannibal spoke of them.

“Yes.” Hannibal smiled. “I could not imagine a better person.”

“And you uncle?”

Hannibal glanced at the clock on the dashboard. “My uncle is going to quite upset if I am late.”

“Oh. Sorry.” Will didn’t want to get out of the car.

“And you will likely want your truck back before Chief Crawford comes home so you do not have to explain about the Biology incident.”

“I’m sure he’s already heard. There are no secrets in Forks,” sighed Will.

Hannibal laughed, but there was an edge to his laughter. “Have fun at the beach, Will... Good weather for sun-bathing.” He glanced out at the sheeting rain.

“I won’t see you tomorrow?”

“No, I am starting the weekend early.”

“What are you going to do?” A friend could ask that, right? Will hoped the disappointment wasn’t too apparent in his voice.

“I must take my uncle to a doctor’s appointment.”

Will remembered Jack saying that Hannibal took care of his uncle. “Oh. Well, have fun...doing that.”

“Will you do something for me this weekend?” Hannibal turned to look Will straight in the eyes, utilising the full power of his burning red-brown eyes.

He nodded helplessly.

“Do not be offended, Will, but you seem to attract accidents like a magnet attracts metal shavings. Please try not to fall into the ocean or get hit by any more cars, alright?” Hannibal smiled faintly.

The helplessness had faded as he spoke. Will glared at him. “I’ll see what I can do.”

Scary Stories

Chapter Summary

> Now, Will had to decide if it was possible that what Beverly had said about Hannibal could be true.
> Immediately his mind responded with a resounding negative.
> It was silly and morbid to entertain such ridiculous notions. But what, then? Will asked himself.
> There was no other rational explanation for how he was alive at this moment. He listed again in his head the things he'd observed himself: the impossible speed and strength, the eye colour shifting from black to maroon and back again, the inhuman beauty, the pale, frigid skin. And more—small things that registered slowly—how he never seemed to eat, the disturbing grace with which Hannibal moved. And the way he spoke, with that thick foreign accent and confusing metaphors that better fit the style of a post-modern magical realist novel than a twenty-first century classroom. He had skipped class the day they'd done blood typing. Hannibal hadn't said no to the beach trip until he heard they were going to La Push

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

> The next night at dinner, Jack seemed enthusiastic about Will's trip to La Push in the morning. Of course, Jack knew the names of all the kids going and their parents, and their grandparents too, probably. Will wondered if he'd approve of his plan to ride to Seattle with Hannibal Lecter—not that Will was going to tell him.

Will meant to sleep in, but an unusual brightness woke him. He opened his eyes to see a clear yellow light streaming through his window. Will couldn't believe it. He hurried to the window to check, and sure enough, there was the sun. It was too low in the sky, and it didn't seem to be as close as it should be, but it was definitely the sun. Clouds ringed the horizon, but a large patch of blue was visible in the middle. Will lingered by the window as long as he could, afraid that if left the blue would disappear again.

The Blooms' Olympic Outfitters was just north of town. Will had seen the store, but he'd never stopped there—he was a fisherman, not a hiker or a hunter, and Forks didn't have any really good fishing spots. In the parking lot Will recognised Alana's Suburban and Eldon's Sentra. As he pulled up next to their vehicles, he could see the group standing around the front of the Suburban. Franklyn was there, along with Eldon. Freddie was there, flanked by Alana and the shy Abigail Hobbs. Two other girls stood with them, including one Will vaguely remembered as being named Georgia.

At least Alana was happy to see Will. “You came!” she called, delighted. “And I said it would be sunny today, didn’t I? We’re just waiting for Chilton and Nick now—unless you invited someone?”

“Nope,” Will lied lightly, hoping he wouldn’t get caught in the lie. But also hoping that a miracle would occur, and Hannibal would appear.

Alana looked satisfied. “Will you ride in my car? It’s that or Georgia Madchen’s mom’s minivan.”

“Sure.”

She smiled blissfully. It was so easy to make Alana happy.

“You can have shotgun,” she promised.

It was only fifteen miles to La Push from Forks, with dense green forest edging the road most of the way and the wide Quillayute River snaking beneath it twice. They’re rolled the windows down—the Suburban was a big claustrophobic with nine people in it—and Will tried to absorb as much sunlight as possible.

Will had been to the beaches around La Push many times during his weeks with Jack, so the mile-long crescent of First Beach was familiar to him. It was still breathtaking. The water was dark grey, even in the sunlight, white-capped and heaving to the grey, rocky shore. The tide-line was strewn with huge driftwood trees, bleached bone white in the salt waves, some piled together against the edge of the forest fringe, some lying solitary, just out of the reach of the waves.

The cloud still circled the skin, threatening to invade at any moment, but for now the sun shone bravely in its halo of blue sky.

They picked their way down to the beach, Alana leading the way to a ring of driftwood logs that had obviously been used for parties like theirs before. There was a fire circle already in place, filled with black ashes. Nick and Franklyn gathered broken branches of driftwood from drier piles against the forest edge, and soon had a tepee-shaped construction built atop the old cinders.

“Have you ever seen a driftwood fire?” Alana asked Will. He was sitting on one of the bone-coloured benches; everyone else was clustered, talking excitedly, on other benches or the dirt. Alana kneeled by the fire, lighting one of the smaller sticks with a cigarette lighter.

“Yeah,” Will said as she placed the blazing twig carefully against the tepee.

“It’s amazing, right?” She lit another branch and laid it alongside the first. The flames quickly started to lick up the dry wood. “The salt-blue is pretty.”

After half an hour of chatter, some of the group wanted to hike to the nearby tide pools. They were nothing new to Will, having been raised on boats and on docks, but he waited until

Alana had committed to leading the tour to get up to join the pro-hiking group.

The hike wasn't too long, though Will hated to lose the sky in the woods. The green light of the woods was strangely at odds with the adolescent laughter, too murky and ominous to be in harmony with the light banter around them. Eventually, they broke through the emerald confines of the forest and found the rocky shore again. Along the pebbled banks of a tidal river, shallow pools that never completely drained were teeming with life.

Will found a stable-looking rock on the fringe of one of the largest pools and sat there cautiously, spellbound by the natural aquarium below. He was completely absorbed.

Finally, everyone else got hungry, and Will got up stiffly to follow them back. When they got back to First Beach, the group they'd left behind had multiplied—teenagers from the Quileute reservation come to socialise. The food was already being passed around, and everyone hurried to claim their share while Freddie introduced them all as they entered the driftwood circle. Will was the last to arrive, and as Freddie said his name, Will noticed a girl sitting on the stones near the fire glance up at him in interest.

Will took a seat next to Abigail with his sandwich in tow while the new girl Will had noticed rattled off the name of the two others with her. All Will caught was that her name was Beverly, and that the oldest of them was named Jimmy.

It was relaxing to sit with Abigail; she was a restful kind of person to be around—she didn't feel the need to fill every silence with chatter. She left Will free to think undisturbed while they ate. Will could see why Hannibal might have let her keep his company sometimes.

The crowd thinned out as lunch ended, heading back to hike some more or to explore the rocky coastline a little more. A few minutes after Abigail left with the hikers, Beverly sauntered over to take her place by Will's side.

She looked sixteen, maybe seventeen, and had shoulder-length glossy black hair with a black leather biker jacket. She was pretty, but Will's positive first impression was damaged by the first words out of her mouth.

"You're William Graham, aren't you?"

It was like the first day of school all over again.

"Will," he sighed.

"I'm Beverly Katz—Bev." She held her hand out in a friendly gesture. "You bought my foster dad's truck."

"Oh," Will said, relieved, shaking her slender hand. "I probably should remember you, right?" He had faint memories of the home on the La Push reservation he'd spent a week in as an eight year old, when Jack had to go out of town for a case and his father had been up in Michigan. It had been a foster home, run by Billy, one of the tribal leaders.

She laughed. “No, that’s okay, I was about a year younger than you. Jimmy and Brian are the ones who get to be offended about that. So how do you like the truck?”

“Love it. It runs great.”

“Yeah, but it’s really slow,” she chuckled. “I was so relieved when Jack bought it. Billy wouldn’t let me work on building another car when we had a perfectly good vehicle right there.”

“It’s not that slow,” Will objected.

“Have you tried to go over sixty?”

“No,” he admitted.

“Go. Do yourself a favour and don’t.” Bev grinned.

Will couldn’t help smiling back. “It does great in a collision,” he offered in his truck’s defence.

“I don’t think a tank could take out that monster,” she agreed with another laugh.

“So you build cars?” asked Will, impressed. He knew his way around boats forwards and backwards, but cars were still a mystery to him.

“When I have free time, yeah, and parts. You wouldn’t happened to know of any 1986 Volkswagen Rabbit master cylinders lying around anywhere, would you?” Bev added jokingly.

“I haven’t seen any lately, but I’ll keep my eyes open for you.” She was easy to talk with, a rarity for Will.

Bev flashed a brilliant smile, looking at Will appreciatively.

“You know Will, Beverly?” Chilton asked—in what Will imagined was an insolent tone—from across the fire. Will was under the impression that Chilton didn’t like anyone, except for maybe Alana.

“Yeah, we were in the same foster home.”

“Interesting.” Chilton didn’t sound like he found it interesting at all, and his dark, fishy eyes narrowed. “Will,” he said, watching Will’s face carefully, “I was just saying to Freddie how unfortunate it was that Hannibal couldn’t come out with us today. Didn’t anyone think to invite them?” His expression of concern was unconvincing.

“You mean Hannibal Lecter?” Bev asked, before Will could respond, much to Chilton’s obvious irritation.

“Yes, do you know them?” Chilton asked condescendingly.

“Hannibal Lecter doesn’t come here,” she said in a tone that closed the subject, ignoring Chilton’s question.

Will stared at her, taken aback, but Bev was looking away towards the dark forest behind them. She’d said that Hannibal didn’t come here, but her tone had implied something more—that he wasn’t allowed; was prohibited. Her manner left a strange impression on Will, and he tried unsuccessfully to ignore it.

“Do you want to walk down the beach with me?” Will asked, turning to Beverly with a half-smile.

Bev jumped up willingly enough, and they walked north, across the multihued stones towards the driftwood seawall. The clouds finally closed ranks across the sky, causing the sea to darken and the temperature to drop. Will shoved his hands deep into the pockets of his jacket and forced small talk for a few minutes.

“What were you saying about Hannibal Lecter?” Will asked innocently.

“He’s not supposed to come onto the reservation.” She looked away, out toward James Island, as she confirmed what Will had thought.

“Why not?”

She glanced back at him, biting her lip. “I’m not supposed to say anything about that.”

“I won’t tell anyone. I’m just curious.”

“Well,” she sighed. “Do you like scary stories?”

“I love them,” Will enthused, trying to make his interest seem natural

Beverly strolled to a nearby driftwood tree that had its roots sticking out like the attenuated legs of a huge, pale spider. She perched lightly on one of the twisted roots while Will sat beneath her on the body of the tree. She stared down at the rocks, a smile hovering on the edges of her thin lips. Will could tell she was going to try to make this good.

“Do you know any of the old stories, about the Quileute origins?” she began.

“Not really,” Will admitted.

“Well, there are lot of legends. And one legend claims that we came from wolves—and that wolves are our brother still. It’s against tribal law to kill them.

“Then there are the stories about the cold ones.” Her voice dropped a little lower.

“The cold ones?” asked Will, not faking his intrigue now.

“Yeah. There are stories of the cold ones as old as the wolf legends, and some are much more recent. According to legend, Billy’s father knew some of them. He was the one who made the treaty that keeps them off of our land. He was a tribal elder. The cold ones are the natural

enemies of the wolf—well, not the wolf, really—but the wolves that turn into men, like the ancestors. You'd call them werewolves."

"Werewolves have enemies?"

"Only one. So, you see," Bev continued, "the cold ones are traditionally our enemies. But the one that came to this territory during Billy's father's time was different. He was alone, and the way he hunted wasn't supposed to be dangerous to the tribe. So they made a truce. If the cold one stayed off the Quileute lands, they wouldn't expose them to the rest of the world."

"If he wasn't dangerous, then why...." Will tried to understand, struggling not to let her see how seriously he was considering this ghost story.

"There's always a risk for humans to be around the cold ones, even if they're civilised like this one was. You never know when they might get too hungry to resist." She deliberately worked a thick edge of menace into her tone.

"What do you mean, 'civilised'?"

"He claimed that he didn't hunt regular humans. He was supposedly able to prey on other things."

Will tried to keep his voice casual. "So how does that fit in with Hannibal Lecter? Is he like the cold one Billy's father met?"

"No." Bev paused melodramatically. "He is the *same* one. The Washington Ripper, they call him."

"And what is he?" Will finally asked. "What *are* the cold ones?"

She smiled darkly. "Blood drinkers," she answered in a chilling voice. "Vampires."

Will stared out at the rough surf after she answered, not sure what his face was revealing.

"You have goosebumps," she laughed delightedly.

"Good storyteller," Will complimented, still looking into the waves.

"Pretty crazy, right, though? No wonder Billy doesn't want us to talk about it to anyone."

"Don't worry, I won't tell on you."

"I guess I just violated the treaty," she laughed.

"I'll take it to my grave," promised Will, and then he shivered.

"Seriously, though, don't say anything to Jack. He was pretty mad at Billy when he heard that none of us were going to Forks High anymore because Hannibal was there."

"I won't."

Will opened his eyes to a familiar place. Aware in some corner of his consciousness that he was dreaming, Will recognised the green light of the forest. He could hear the waves crashing on the rocks in the background. He knew that if he found the ocean, he would also find the sun.

Will was trying to follow the sound, but then Beverly Katz was there, tugging on his hand, pulling him back towards the darkest part of the forest.

“Bev? What’s wrong?” he asked. Her face was frightened as she yanked with all her strength against his resistance; he didn’t want to go back into the dark.

“Run, Will, you have to run,” she whispered, terrified.

“This way, Will!” He recognised Alana’s voice calling out of the gloomy heart of the forest, but he couldn’t see her.

“Why?” he asked again, still pulling against Beverly’s grasp, desperate now to find the sun.

But Bev let go of his hand and yelped, suddenly shaking, falling to the dim forest floor. She twitched on the ground as Will watched in horror.

Before he could react, she was gone. In her place was a large red-brown wolf with black eyes. The wolf faced away from him, pointing towards the shore, that hair on the back of her shoulders bristling, low growls issuing from between her exposed fangs.

“Run, Will!” Alana cried out again from behind Will. But he didn’t turn. He was watching a light coming towards him from the beach.

And then Hannibal stepped out from the trees, his skin faintly glowing, his eyes black and dangerous, hand on the back of the pitch-black stag. Hannibal held up one hand and beckoned Will to come to him, but the wolf growled at his feet.

Will took a step forward, toward Hannibal. Hannibal smiled then, and his teeth were pointed, sharp.

“Trust me,” Hannibal purred. “I will not lie to you.”

Will took another step.

The wolf launched herself across the space between Will and the vampire, fangs aiming for the jugular.

“No!” Will screamed, wrenching upright out of his bed.

His sheets and pyjamas were soaked with cold sweat, and his light was still on. He glanced, disoriented, at the clock on his dresser. It was five thirty in the morning.

Will groaned, fell back, and rolled over onto his stomach.

Now, Will had to decide if it was possible that what Beverly had said about Hannibal could be true.

Immediately his mind responded with a resounding negative.

It was silly and morbid to entertain such ridiculous notions. But what, then? Will asked himself.

There was no other rational explanation for how he was alive at this moment. He listed again in his head the things he'd observed himself: the impossible speed and strength, the eye colour shifting from black to maroon and back again, the inhuman beauty, the pale, frigid skin. And more—small things that registered slowly—how he never seemed to eat, the disturbing grace with which Hannibal moved. And the way he spoke, with that thick foreign accent and confusing metaphors that better fit the style of a post-modern magical realist novel than a twenty-first century classroom. He had skipped class the day they'd done blood typing. Hannibal hadn't said no to the beach trip until he heard they were going to La Push. Will usually could guess what everyone around him was planning and thinking....except Hannibal. Hannibal had told him he was the villain, dangerous....

Could Hannibal be a vampire?

Well, he was *something*. Something outside the possibility of rational justification was taking place in front of Will's incredulous eyes. Whether it was Beverly's *Washington Ripper* or Will's own superhero theory, Hannibal Lecter was not....human. He was something more.

So then—maybe. That would have to be Will's answer for now.

And then the most important question of all. What was Will going to do if it was true?

If Hannibal was a vampire—he could hardly make himself think the words—then what should he do? Involving someone else was definitely out. He couldn't even believe it himself; anyone he told would have him committed.

Only two options seemed practical. The first was to take his advice: to be smart, to avoid him as much as possible. To cancel their plans, to go back to ignoring him as far as Will was able. To pretend there was an impenetrably thick glass wall between them in the one class where they'd been forced together. To tell Hannibal to leave him alone—and mean it this time.

Will was gripped in a sudden agony of despair as he considered that alternative. His mind rejected the pain, quickly skipping on to the next option.

He could do nothing different. After all, if Hannibal was something....sinister, he'd done nothing to hurt him so far. In fact, Will would have been a dent in Eldon's fender if he hadn't acted so quickly. So quickly, he argued with himself, that it might have been sheer reflexes. But if it was a reflex to save lives, how bad could he be? Will retorted. His head spun around in answerless circles.

There was one thing Will was sure of, if he was sure of anything. The dark Hannibal in his dream last night was a reflection only of his fear of the word Beverly had spoken, and not

Hannibal himself. Even so, when he'd screamed out in terror at the werewolf's lunge, it wasn't fear for the wolf that brought the cry of "no" to Will's lips. It was fear that *he* would be harmed—even as Hannibal called to him with sharpened fangs, Will feared for *him*.

And Will knew in that he had his answer. He didn't know if there was ever a choice, really. He was already in too deep. Now that Will knew—*if* he knew—he could do nothing about his frightening secret. Because when he thought of Hannibal, of his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, Will wanted nothing more than to be with him right now. Even if....but Will couldn't think about it. Not here, alone in the darkening forest. Not while the rain made it as dim as twilight under the canopy and pattered like footsteps across the matted earthen floor. He shivered and rose quickly from his place of concealment, worried that somehow the path would have disappeared with the rain.

But it was there, safe and clear, winding its way out of the dripping green maze. Will followed it hastily, his hood pulled close around his face, becoming surprised, as he nearly ran through the trees, at how far he'd come. He started to wonder if he was heading out at all, or following the path further into the confines of the forest. Before he could get too panicky, though, Will began to glimpse some open spaces through the webbed branches. And then he could hear a car passing on the streets, and he was free, Jack's lawn stretched out in front of him, the house beckoning Will, promising warmth and dry socks.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't resist the idea of the lab team as werewolves. I just couldn't.

Port Angeles

Chapter Summary

> Will's mind still swirled dizzily, full of images he couldn't understand, and some he fought to repress. Nothing seemed clear at first, but as he fell gradually closer to unconsciousness, a few certainties became evident.
> About three things Will was absolutely positive. First, Hannibal was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him—and Will didn't know how potent that part might be—that thirsted for Will's blood. And third, Will was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him.

"I never noticed before—your hair has red in it," Alana commented, catching between her fingers a strand of Will's hair that was fluttering in the light breeze.

"Only in the sun." Will became just a little uncomfortable as she tucked the lock behind his ear.

"Great day, isn't it?"

"My kind of day," Will agreed.

"What did you do yesterday?" Alana's tone was just little too proprietary.

"I mostly worked on my Psych essay." He didn't add that he was finished with it—no need to sound smug.

Alana hit her forehead with the heel of her hand. "Oh—that's due Thursday, right?"

"Um, Wednesday, I think."

"Wednesday?" She frowned. "That's not good... What are you writing yours on?"

"The God complex inherent in the case of the Angel-Maker, that serial killer who went around cutting people's shoulders up to make it look like they had wings. Jack helped catch him."

Alana stared at him like he'd just spoken in Pig Latin.

"I guess I'll have to get to work on that tonight," she said, deflated. "I was going to ask if you wanted to go out."

"Oh." Will was taken off-guard. Why couldn't he ever have a pleasant conversation with Alana any more without it getting awkward?

“Well, we could go to dinner or something....and then I could work on it later.” She smiled at Will hopefully.

“Alana...” He hated being put on the spot “I don’t think that would be the best idea.”

Her face fell. “Why?” she asked, her eyes guarded. His thoughts flickered to Hannibal, wondering if that’s where his thoughts were as well.

“I think...and if you ever repeat what I’m saying right now I will cheerfully tell Freddie Lounds your every secret,” he threatened, “but I think that would hurt Chilton’s feelings.”

She was bewildered, obviously not thinking in that direction at all. “Frederick Chilton?”

“Really, Alana are you blind?”

“Oh,” she exhaled—clearly dazed. Will took advantage of that to make his escape.

“It’s time for class, I can’t be late again.” He gathered his books up and stuffed them in his bag.

They walked in silence to building three, and her expression was distracted. Will hoped whatever thoughts she was immersed in were leading her in the right direction.

Will watched TV with Jack after dinner, for something to do. There wasn’t anything on either of them wanted to watch, so Jack just left it on some mindless sitcom that neither of them enjoyed. Jack seemed comforted, though, to be doing something together.

“Alana and Abigail are going to look for dresses for the dance tomorrow night in Port Angeles, and they wanted me to help them,” Will said during a commercial. “Is it okay if I go with them?”

Jack gave him a sidelong glance. “Two girls want *you* to go dress shopping with them? To a dance you aren’t even going to?”

“I’m a guy, they want a guy’s opinion.” Will shrugged.

“Uh, okay.” Jack seemed to realise he was out of his element here. “It’s a school night, though.”

“We’re leaving right after school, so we can get back early.”

Jack shrugged. “Whatever.”

Port Angeles was a beautiful little tourist trap, much more polished and quaint than Forks. But Alana and Abigail knew it well, so they didn’t plan to waste time. Alana drove straight to the one big department store in town, which was a few streets in from the bay area’s visitor-friendly face.

They dance was billed as semiformal, and listening to the girls argue about what exactly that met, Will was glad he'd never had to worry about dresses or school dances. Both Alana and Abigail seemed surprised when Will told them that he'd never gone to a dance before.

"Didn't you ever go with a girlfriend or boyfriend or something?" Alana asked dubiously as they walked through the front doors of the stores.

"Really," Will tried to convince her, not wanting to confess how little he'd gone out before. "Never had anything close. I moved around too much."

"Why not?" demanded Alana.

"No one asked me," Will answered honestly.

She looked sceptical. "People try to ask you out all the time here," she reminded him, "and you ignore them." They were in the juniors' section now, scanning the racks for dress-up clothes.

"Well, except for Eldon," Abigail amended quietly.

"Excuse me?" Will said. "What?"

"Eldon Stammets told everyone you're going to prom together," Alana informed him with suspicious eyes.

"He said *what*?" Will sounded like he was choking.

"I told you it wasn't true," Abigail murmured to Alana.

Will was silent, still lost in shock that was quickly turning to irritation. But they had found the dress racks, and now they had work to do. He ground his teeth as they pawed through the clothes. "Do you think if I ran him over with my truck he would stop feeling guilty about the accident?"

"Maybe," Alana snickered. "*If* that's why he's doing this."

The dress selection wasn't large, but both Alana and Abigail found a few things to try on. Will sat in a low chair just outside the dressing room, trying to control his fuming.

Alana was torn between two—one a long, strapless basic black number, the other a knee-length deep blue with spaghetti straps. Will encourages her to go with the blue; it played up her eyes. Abigail chose a pale pink dress that draped around her petite frame nicely and brought out auburn tints in her medium brown hair. Will complimented them both generously and helped by returned the rejects to the racks.

They headed over to shoes and accessories. The high of the trip was wearing off on the wake of his annoyance at Tyler, leaving room for the gloom to move back in.

"Abigail?" Will began, hesitant, while she was trying on a pair of pink strappy heels—she was overjoyed to have an excuse to dress up. Alana had drifted to the jewellery counter and

they were alone.

“Yes?” She held her leg out, twisting her ankle to get a better view of the shoe.

Will chickened out. “I like those.”

“I think I’ll get them—though they’ll never match anything but the one dress,” she mused.

“They’re on sale,” Will offered. She smiled, putting the lid back on a box that contained more practical-looking off-white shoes.

Will tried again. “Um, Abigail...” She looked up curiously.

“Is it normal for... Hannibal Lecter”—he kept his on the shoes—“to be out of school a lot?” Will failed miserably in his attempt to sound nonchalant.

“Yeah, his uncle is really sick. He can’t even leave the house, so Hannibal has to do everything for him,” Abigail told him quietly, examining her shoes, too. She didn’t ask one question, let alone the hundreds that Freddie or Alana would have unleashed. Will was really beginning to like Alana.

“Oh.” He let the subject drop as Alana returned to show them the rhinestone jewellery she had found to match her silver shoes.

They’d planned to go to dinner at a little Italian restaurant on the boardwalk, but the shopping hadn’t taken as long as they’d expected. Alana and Abigail were going to take their clothes back to the chair and then walk down to the bay. He told them he would meet them at the restaurant in an hour—Will wanted to look for a bookstore. They were both willing to come with him, but Will encouraged them to go have fun—they didn’t notice how preoccupied Will could get when surrounded by books; it was something he preferred to do alone. The girls walked off to the car chattering happily, and Will headed in the direction Alana pointed out.

He meandered through the streets, which were filling up with end-of-the-workday traffic, and hoped he was headed toward downtown. Will wasn’t paying as much attention as he should have been to where he was going; he was trying so hard not to think about Hannibal, and what Abigail had said....and more than anything trying to beat down his hopes for Saturday, fearing a disappointment more painful than the rest, when he looked up to see someone’s grey Bentley parked along the street and it all came crashing down on him. Stupid, unreliable vampire, Will thought to himself.

Will stomped along in a southerly direction, starting to realise, as he crossed another road, that he was going the wrong direction. The little foot traffic he had seen was going north, and it looked like the buildings were mostly warehouses. He decided to turn east at the next corner, and then loop around and try his luck on a different street on his way back to the boardwalk.

A man turned around the corner Will was heading for, dressed in a suit too nice to be heading home from a warehouse or to be a tourist. As Will approached him, he realised he wasn’t too

many years older than Will was. Will scooted as far to the inside of the sidewalk as he could to give him room, walking swiftly.

“Hello,” the man called as Will passed, and he had to be talking to Will since no one else was around. Will glanced up automatically.

The man had paused. He was lean, built like a runner, in his early twenties. He was wearing a three piece grey suit, neatly dressed and cleanly shaven.

“Uh, hi,” Will mumbled, a knee-jerk reaction. Then he quickly looked away and walked faster towards the corner. He could hear the man laughing at full volume behind him.

“Hey, wait!” the man called after him, but Will kept his head down and rounded the corner with a sigh of relief. He could still hear the man chortling behind him.

Will found himself on a sidewalk leading past the backs of several sombre-coloured warehouses, each with large bay doors for unloading trucks, padlocked for the night. The south side of the street had no sidewalk, only a chain-link fence with barbed wire protecting some kind of engine parts storage yard. Will had wandered far past the part of Port Angeles that he, as a guest, was intended to see. It was getting dark, he realised, the clouds returning, piling up on the western horizon, creating an early sunset. He’d left his jacket in the car, and a sudden shiver made him cross his arms tightly over his chest. A single van passed him, and then the road was empty.

The sky suddenly darkened further, and as Will looked over his shoulder to glare at the offending cloud, he realised with a shock that the man from earlier was walking quietly twenty feet behind him.

Will turned his head forward at once, quickening his pace. A chill that had nothing to do with the weather made him shiver again. His wallet was in his front right pocket. He didn’t have much money with him, just a twenty and some ones, and he thought about “accidentally” dropping his wallet and walking away. But a small, frightened voice in the back of his mind had begun connecting the dots of the man’s mind, and warned him that the man’s suit was too nice to belong to a petty mugger.

Will listened intently to the man’s quiet footsteps, and it didn’t sound like he was speeding up or getting any closer to Will. Breathe, Will had to remind himself. He didn’t know that the man was following him. He continued to walk as quickly as he could without actually running, focusing on the right-hand turn that was only a few yards from him now.

It seemed to take forever for Will to get to the corner. He kept his pace steady, the man behind him falling ever so slightly farther behind with every step. He saw two cars going towards the intersection he was heading for, and Will sighed in relief. There would be more people around once he got off this deserted street. He skipped around the corner with a grateful sigh.

And skidded to a stop.

The street was lined on both sides by blank, doorless, windowless walls, and closed in at the end by another chain-link fence around a road construction site. Will realised then that he wasn't being followed.

He was being herded.

He paused only for a second, but it felt like a very long time. He turned then and darted to the other side of the road. Will had a sinking feeling that it was a wasted attempt. The footsteps behind him were louder now.

"There you are!" The booming voice of the man behind him shattered the intense quiet and made Will jump as he tried to hurry back down the street. The man was closing the distance between them too quickly for Will to possibly outrun him.

With a quick movement Will slipped his folding knife out of his pocket and opened it, gripping it with one hand, ready to use it as need demanded.

"Stay away from me," Will warned in a voice that was supposed to sound strong and fearless. But his throat was too dry—no volume.

"There is no need to be like that," the man called, and started laughing again.

Will braced himself, feet apart, trying to remember through his panic the self-defence he knew. He had his knife—blade into the eye, standard knee to the groin, hook-kick the knees out. The same pessimistic voice in Will's head spoke up then, reminding him that he stood no chance against the man, who had to be an experienced killer to know how to herd someone like this. *Shut up,* Will commanded the voice before terror could incapacitate him. He wasn't going out with taking the man with him. Will tried to swallow so he could build up a decent scream.

Headlights suddenly flew around the corner, the car almost hitting the man, forcing him to jump back toward the sidewalk. Will dove into the road—this car was going to stop, or have to hit him. But the car unexpectedly fishtailed around, skidding to a stop with the passenger door open just a few feet from Will.

"Get in," a furious voice demanded.

It was amazing how instantaneously the choking fear vanished, amazing how suddenly the feeling of security washed over Will—even before he was off the street—as soon as he recognised Hannibal's voice. Will jumped into the seat, slamming the door behind himself.

It was dark in the car, no light had come on with the opening of the door, and Will could barely see Hannibal's face in the glow from the dashboard. The tires squealed as Hannibal spun around to face north, accelerating too quickly, swerving towards the stunned man on the street. Will caught a glimpse of him diving for the sidewalk again as they straightened out and sped towards the harbour.

"Please put on your seatbelt," Hannibal commanded, and Will realised he was clutching the seat with both hands. He quickly obeyed; the snap as the belt connected was loud in the

darkness. Hannibal took a sharp left, racing forward, blowing through several stop signs without a pause.

But Will felt safe and, for the moment, totally unconcerned about where they were going. He stared at Hannibal's face in profound relief, relief that went beyond his sudden deliverance. He studied his flawless features in the limited light, waiting for his breath to return to normal, until it occurred to Will that Hannibal's expression was murderously angry.

"Are you okay?" Will asked, surprised at how hoarse his voice sounded.

"No," he said curtly, and his tone was livid.

Will sat in silence, watching Hannibal's face while his blazing eyes stared straight ahead, until the car came to a sudden stop. Will glanced around, but it was too dark to see anything beside the vague outline of dark trees crowding the roadside. They weren't in town anymore.

"William?" Hannibal asked, his voice tight, controlled.

"Yeah?" His voice was still rough. Will tried to clear his throat quietly.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal still didn't look up at Will, but the fury was plain on his face.

"Yeah," Will croaked softly.

"Distract me, please," he ordered.

"Sorry—what?"

Hannibal exhaled sharply. "Please prattle on about something unimportant until I calm down," he clarified, closing his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger.

"Uh." Will wracked his brain for something trivial. "I'm going to run over Eldon Stammets before school tomorrow?"

Hannibal was still squeezing his eyes closed, but the corner of his mouth twitched. "Why?"

"He's telling everyone that he's taking me to prom—so either he's insane or he's still trying to make up for almost killing me last....well, you remember it, and he thinks *prom* is somehow the correct way to do it. So I figure if I endanger his life, then we're even, and he can't keep trying to make amends. I don't need enemies. I might have to total his Sentra, though. If he doesn't have a ride he can't take anyone to prom...." Will babbled on.

"I heard about that." He sounded a bit more composed.

"*You* did?" Will asked in disbelief, his previous petty irritation flaring. "If he's paralysed from the neck down, he can't go to prom, either," he muttered, refining his plan.

Hannibal sighed, and finally opened his eyes.

“Better?”

“Not really.”

Will waited, but Hannibal didn’t speak again. Hannibal leaned his head back against the seat, staring at the ceiling of the car. His face was rigid.

“What’s wrong?” Will’s voice came out in a whisper.

“I....sometimes have a problem with my temper, Will.” Hannibal was whispering, too, and as he stared out the window, his eyes narrowed into slits. “It would not be helpful for me turn around at the moment and hunt down that....” He didn’t finish his sentence, looking away, struggling for a moment to control his anger again. “At least,” he continued, “that is what I am attempting to convince myself.”

“Oh.” The word seemed inadequate, but Will couldn’t think of a better response.

They sat in silence again. Will glanced at the clock on the dashboard. It was past six-thirty.

“Alana and Abigail will be worried,” Will murmured. “I was supposed to meet them.”

Hannibal started the engine without another word, turning around smoothly and speeding back toward town. They were under the streetlights in no time at all, still going too fast, weaving with ease though the cars slowly cruising the boardwalk. He parallel-parked against the curb in a space Will would have thought much too small for the Bentley, but he slid in effortlessly in one try. Will looked out the window to see the lights of La Bella Italia, and Abigail and Alana just leaving, pacing anxiously away from them.

“How did you know where....?” Will began, but then he just shook his head. He heard the door open and turned to see Hannibal getting out. “What are you doing?”

“I am taking you out to dinner.” Hannibal smiled slightly, but his eyes were still hard. He stepped out of the car and slammed the door. Will fumbled with his seat belt, and then hurried to get out of the car as well. Hannibal was waiting for him on the sidewalk.

He spoke before Will could. “You should stop Alana and Abigail before I must track them down, too. I do not think I could....restrain myself if I ran into your *other* friend again.”

Will shivered at the threat in Hannibal’s voice.

“Alana! Abigail!” he yelled after them, waving when the girls turned. They rushed towards him, the pronounced relief on both their faces simultaneously changing to surprise as they saw who Will was standing next to. The girls hesitated a few feet from them.

“Where have you been?” Alana’s voice was suspicious.

“I got lost,” Will lied. “And then I ran into Hannibal.”

“Would it be alright if I joined you?” Hannibal asked in his exotically accented, irresistible voice. Will could see from the girls’ staggered expressions that Hannibal had never unleashed

his talents on them before.

“Uh, actually, Will, we already ate while we were waiting—sorry,” Alana confessed.

“It’s fine, I’m not hungry.” Will shrugged.

“I believe you should eat something.” Hannibal’s voice was low, but full of authority. He looked up at Alana and spoke slightly louder. “Do you mind if I drive Will home tonight? This way you will not have to wait while we eat.”

“Um, no problem, I guess....” Alana bit her lip, trying to figure out from Will’s expression whether that was what he wanted. Will winked at her. He wanted to be alone with his perpetual saviour. There were so many questions he couldn’t bombard Hannibal with till they were by themselves.

“Okay.” Abigail was quicker than Alana. “See you tomorrow, Will... Hannibal.” She grabbed Alana’s hand and pulled her towards the car, which Will could see a little ways away, parked across First Street. As they got in, Alana turned around and waved, her face eager with curiosity. Will waved back, waiting for them to drive away before he turned to face Hannibal.

“Honestly, I’m not hungry,” Will insisted, looking up to scrutinise Hannibal’s face. His expression was unreadable.

“Humour me.”

Hannibal walked to the door of the restaurant and held it open with an obstinate expression. Obviously, there would be no further discussion. Will walked past him into the restaurant with a resigned sigh.

The restaurant wasn’t crowded—it was the off-season in Port Angeles. The host was female, and Will didn’t need to be an empath to understand the look in her eyes as she assessed Hannibal. She welcomed him a little more warmly than was necessary. Will was surprised by how much that bothered him. She was several inches taller than he was, and unnaturally blonde.

“A table for two?” Hannibal’s voice was alluring, whether he was aiming for that or not. Will saw her eyes flicker to him and then away, satisfied by his obvious ordinariness, and by the cautious, no-contact space Hannibal kept between them. She led them to a table big enough for four in the centre of the most crowded area of the dining floor.

Will was about to sit, but Hannibal shook his head at him.

“Perhaps something a bit more private?” he insisted quietly to the host. Will wasn’t sure, but it looked like he smoothly handed her a tip. He’d never seen anyone refuse a table except in old movies.

“Sure.” She sounded as surprised as Will was. She turned around and led them around a partition to a small ring of booths—all of them empty. “How’s this?”

“Perfect.” Hannibal flashed his gleaming smile, dazing her momentarily.

“Um,”—she shook her head, blinking—“your server will be right out.” She walked away unsteadily.

“You really shouldn’t do that to people,” Will criticised. “It can’t be fair.”

“Do what?”

“Dazzle them like that—she’s probably hyperventilating in the kitchen right now.”

Hannibal seemed confused.

“Oh, come on,” Will said dubiously. “You *have* to know the effect you have on people.”

He tilted his head to one side, and his maroon eyes were curious. “I dazzle people?”

“You haven’t noticed? Do you think everybody gets their way so easily?”

Hannibal ignored his questions. “Do I....dazzle *you*?”

“Frequently,” Will admitted.

And then their server arrived, her face expectant. The hostess had definitely dished behind the scenes, and the new girl didn’t look disappointed. She flipped a strand of short black hair behind one ear and smiled with unnecessary warmth.

“Hello, my name is Amber and I’ll be your server tonight. What can I get you to drink?” Will didn’t miss that she was only speaking to Hannibal.

Hannibal looked at Will.

“I’ll have a Coke.” It sounded more like a question than Will had intended.

“Two Cokes,” Hannibal said.

“I’ll be right back with that,” she assured him with another unnecessary smile. But Hannibal didn’t see it. He was watching Will.

“What?” Will asked when she left.

Hannibal’s eyes stayed fixed on his face. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine,” Will replied, surprised by his intensity.

“You do not feel dizzy, sick, cold...?”

“Should I?”

He chuckled at Will’s puzzled tone. “Well, I am waiting for you to go into shock.” His face twisted up into that perfect crooked smile.

“I don’t think that’ll ever happen,” Will said, after he could breathe again. “I’ve always been really good at repressing things.”

“Just the same, I will feel better when you have some substance in you. I would not want you to lose consciousness.”

Right on cue, the waitress appeared with their drinks and a basket of breadsticks. She stood with her back to Will as she placed them on the table. “Are you ready to order?” she asked Hannibal.

“Will?” he asked. She turned unwillingly away from Hannibal.

Will picked the first thing he saw on the menu. “Um.... I’ll have the mushroom ravioli.”

“And you?” She turned back to Hannibal with a smile.

“Nothing for me,” he said. Of course not.

“Let me know if you change your mind.” The coy smile was still in place, but Hannibal wasn’t looking at her, and she left dissatisfied.

“Drink, please,” he ordered.

Will sipped at his soda obediently, and then drank more deeply, surprised by how thirsty he was. He realised he had finished the whole thing when Hannibal pushed his glass towards Will.

“Thanks,” Will muttered, still thirsty. The cold from the icy soda was radiating through his chest, and he shivered.

“Are you cold?”

“It’s just the soda,” Will explained, shivering again.

“Do you not have a jacket?” His voice was disapproving.

“Yes.” Will looked at the empty bench next to him. “Oh. I left it in Alana’s car,” he realised.

Hannibal was shrugging out of his jacked. Will suddenly realised that he had never once noticed what he was wearing—not just tonight, but ever. Will just couldn’t seem to look away from his face. Will made himself look now, focusing. Hannibal was removing a light khaki suit jacket now; underneath he wore an ivory sweater and white button-up shirt. It fit him snugly, emphasizing how muscular he was.

He handed Will the jacket, interrupting his ogling.

“Thanks,” Will said again, sliding his arms into Hannibal’s jacket. It was cold—the way Will’s own jacket felt when he first picked it up in the morning, hanging in the drafty hallway. He shivered again. It smelled amazing. Will inhaled, trying to identify the delicious

scent. It didn't smell like cologne. The sleeves were much too long; he shoved them back so he could free his hands.

"That colour looks lovely with your skin," Hannibal said, watching him. Will was surprised; he looked down, flushing, of course.

He pushed the bread basket towards Will.

"Really, I'm not going to go into shock," Will protested.

"You should be—a *normal* person would be. You do not even look shaken." Hannibal seemed unsettled. He stared into Will's eyes, and Will saw how light his eyes were, lighter than Will had ever seen them, almost bright red, flecked with bronze.

"I feel safe with you," Will confessed, mesmerised into telling the truth again.

That displeased Hannibal; his alabaster brow furrowed. He shook his head, frowning. "This is more complicated than I had planned," he murmured to himself.

Will picked up a breadstick and began nibbling on the end, measuring Hannibal's expression. He wondered when it would be okay to start questioning him again.

"You're usually in a better mood when your eyes are so light," Will commented, trying to distract him from whatever thought had left him frowning and sombre.

Hannibal stared at him, stunned. "What?"

"You're always crabbier when your eyes are black—I expect it then," Will went on. "I have a theory about that."

His eyes narrowed. "More theories?"

"Mm-hm." Will chewed on a small bite of bread, trying to look indifferent.

"I do hope you were more creative this time....or are you plagiarising from comic books again?" His faint smile was mocking; his eyes were still tight.

"Well, no, I didn't get it from a comic book, but I didn't come up with it on my own," Will confessed.

But then the waitress strode around the partition with the food. Will realised they'd been unconsciously leaning towards each other across the table, because they both straightened up as she approached. She set the dish down in front of Will—it looked pretty good—and turned quickly to Hannibal.

"Did you change your mind?" she asked. "Is there anything I can get you?" Will may have been imagining a double meaning in her words.

"No, thank you, but another soda would be delightful." Hannibal gestured with a long white hand to the empty cups in front of Will.

“Sure.” She removed the empty glasses and walked away.

“She is quite rude,” Hannibal mumbled to himself. “You were saying, William?” he asked.

“I’ll tell you about it in the car. If...” Will paused.

“There are conditions?” Hannibal raised one eyebrow, his voice ominous.

“I do have a few conditions, of course.”

“Of course.”

The waitress was back with two more Cokes. She set them down without a word this time, and left again.

Will took a sip.

“Well, go ahead,” Hannibal pushed, his voice still hard.

Will started with the most undemanding. Or so he thought. “Why are you in Port Angeles?”

Hannibal looked down, folding his large hands together slowly on the table. His eyes flickered up at Will from under his lashes, the hint of a smirk on his face. “Next, please.”

“But that’s the easiest one,” Will objected.

“Next, please, Will,” he repeated.

Will looked down, frustrated. He unrolled his silverware, picked up his fork, and carefully speared a ravioli. He put it in his mouth slowly, still looking down, chewing while he thought. The mushrooms were good. He swallowed and took another sip of Coke before he looked back up.

“Okay, then.” He glared at Hannibal, and continued slowly. “Let’s say, hypothetically, of course, that...someone.... could usually profile people and sometimes guess what they were thinking, you know—with a few exceptions.”

“Just *one* exception?” Hannibal guessed.

“Just one exception.” Will was thrilled that he was playing along, but he tried to seem casual. “What would make that exception? What was that...one person doing to keep their mind from being read? What is keeping this...person from being anything more than—a, a shadow suspended on dust on the light?” Will wondered if his convoluted question even made sense.

“Perhaps this hypothetical exception is different from the type of person this hypothetical empath is used to connecting with. Perhaps this exception is keeping a very close guard to protect the secrets that could destroy this empath.”

It wasn’t a real answer, but it was as close as Will would ever get. “Okay, so how would someone know someone else was in trouble, even if they weren’t in the same city at that

time? How would he know that to be there at the exactly right time?"

"Hypothetically?" he asked.

"Sure."

"May I extend my earlier mongoose-and-snake metaphor?"

"Uh, okay."

Hannibal smiled wryly. "A mongoose may eat snakes only because it is a clever creature, not because it is the strongest predator. If the mongoose under my house is paying attention to the snakes, there would be no need for such exact timing on my behalf." He shook his head. "Only you could get into trouble in a town so small. You would have devastated their crime statistics for a decade, you know."

"We were speaking hypothetically," Will reminded him frostily.

He laughed at him, his red-brown eyes warm. "Yes, we were. Shall I name my mongoose 'Will Graham'?"

"How did you know?" Will asked, unable to curb his intensity. He realised he was leaning towards Hannibal again.

He seemed to be wavering, torn by some internal dilemma. His eyes locked with Will's, and Will guessed he was making the decision right then whether or not to simply tell the truth.

"You can trust me, you know," Will murmured. He reached forward, without thinking, to touch Hannibal's folded hands, but he slid them away minutely, and Will pulled his hand back.

"I do not know if I have a choice anymore." His voice was almost a whisper. "I was wrong—you are far more observant than I gave you credit for."

"I thought you were always right."

"I used to be." Hannibal shook his head again. "I was wrong about you on one count, as well. You are not a magnet for accidents—that is not a broad enough classification. You are a magnet for *trouble*. If there is anything dangerous within a ten-mile radius, it will invariably find you."

"And you put yourself in that category?" Will guessed.

His face turned cold, expressionless. "Unequivocally."

Will stretched his hand across the table again—ignoring him when he pulled back slightly once more—to touch the back of his hand shyly with his fingertips. Hannibal's skin was cold and hard, like a stone

"Thank you." Will's voice was fervent with gratitude. "You've saved me twice now."

Hannibal's face softened. "Let us not try for three, agreed?"

Will scowled, but nodded. Hannibal moved his hand out from under Will's, placing both of his under the table. But he leaned towards Will.

"I followed you to Port Angeles," Hannibal admitted, speaking in a rush. "I have never tried to keep a specific person alive before, and it is far more troublesome than I would have believed. But that is probably because it is you. Ordinary people seem to make it through the day perfectly unscathed, without such catastrophes." He paused. Will wondered if it should bother him that Hannibal was following him; instead, Will felt a strange surge of pleasure. Hannibal stared, maybe wondering why Will's lips were curving into an involuntary smile.

"Did you ever think that maybe my number was up the first time, with the van, and that now you've been interfering with fate?" Will speculated, distracting himself.

"That was not the first time," he said, and his voice was hard to hear. Will stared at him in amazement, but Hannibal was still looking down. "Your number, so to speak, was up that moment I met you."

Will felt a spasm of fear at his words, and the abrupt memory of his violent black glare that first day....but the overwhelming sense of safety Will felt in his presence stifled it. By the time Hannibal looked up to read his eyes, there was no trace of fear in them.

"You remember?" he asked, his angel's face grave.

"Yes." Will was calm.

"And yet here you sit." There was a trace of disbelief in Hannibal's voice; he raised one eyebrow.

"Yes, here I sit.... Because of you, Hannibal." He paused. "Because you somehow knew how to find me today."

Hannibal pressed his lips together, staring at me through narrowed eyes, deciding again. His flashed down to Will's full plate, and then back to Will.

"You eat, and I will talk," he bargained.

Will quickly scooped up another ravioli and popped it in his mouth.

"It is harder than it should be—keeping track of you. Usually I can find someone very easily." Hannibal looked at him anxiously, and Will realised he had frozen. He made himself swallow, then stabbed another ravioli and tossed it in his mouth.

"I was keeping tabs on Abigail, not carefully—as I said, only you could find trouble in Port Angeles—and at first I did not notice when you took off on your own. When I realised that you were not with her any more, I went looking for you at the bookstore. I could tell that you had not gone in, and that you had turned south. I knew you would have to turn around soon. I was just waiting for you. I had no reason to be worried....but I was strangely anxious." He was lost in thought, staring past Will, seeing things Will couldn't imagine.

“I began to drive in circles. The sun was finally setting, and I was preparing to get out and follow you on foot. And then—” He stopped, clenching his teeth together in sudden fury. He made an effort to calm himself.

“Then what?” Will whispered. Hannibal continued to stared over his head.

“I could smell the killer. I could imagine exactly what he was thinking,” he growled, his upper lips curling slightly back over his teeth. “I could almost *see* your face in his mind.” He suddenly leaned forward, one elbow appearing on the table, his hand covering his eyes. The movement was so swift it startled Will.

“It was....very difficult—you cannot imagine how difficult—for me to simply take you away, and leave him....alive. After the rude things he had planned to do to you.” Hannibal’s voice was muffled by his arm. “I could have let you go with Alana and Abigail, but I was afraid if you left me alone, I would go hunting for him,” he admitted in a whisper.

Will sat quietly, dazed, his thoughts incoherent. His hands were folded in his lap, and he was leaning weakly against the back of the seat. Hannibal still had his face in his hand, and he was as still as if he’d carved from the stone his skin resembled.

Finally he looked up, his eyes seeking mine, full of his own questions.

“Are you ready to go home?” Hannibal asked.

“I’m ready to leave,” Will qualified, overly grateful that they had the hour-long ride home together. He wasn’t ready to say good-bye to Hannibal yet.

Hannibal walked close beside Will to the restaurant’s exit, still careful not to touch him. Will remembered what Freddie had said about her relationship with Wendy, how they were almost to the first-kiss stage. Will sighed. Hannibal seemed to hear him, and he looked down curiously. Will looked at the sidewalk, grateful that he didn’t have to see what Hannibal was thinking.

Hannibal opened the passenger door, holding it for Will as he stepped in, shutting it softly. Will watched him walk around in front of the car, amazed, yet again, by how graceful he was. He probably should have been used to that by now—but he wasn’t. Will had a feeling Hannibal wasn’t the kind of person anyone got used to.

Once inside the car, Hannibal started the engine and turned the heater on high. It had gotten very cold, and Will guessed the good weather was at an end. Will was warm in Hannibal’s wool jacket, though, breathing in the scent of it when he thought Hannibal couldn’t see.

Hannibal pulled out through the traffic, apparently without a glance, flipping around to head toward the freeway.

“Now,” he said significantly, “it’s your turn.”

“Can I just ask one more?” Will pleaded as Hannibal accelerated much too quickly down the quiet street. He didn’t seem to be paying any attention to the road.

Hannibal sighed. “One,” he agreed. His lips pressed together in a cautious line.

“You said you knew I hadn’t gone into the bookstore, and that I had gone south. I was wondering how you knew that.”

He looked away, deliberating.

“I thought we were past the whole evasiveness thing,” Will grumbled.

Hannibal almost smiled. “Fine, then. I followed your scent.” He looked at the road, giving Will time to compose his face. Will couldn’t think of an acceptable response to that, but he filed it carefully way for future study. He tried to refocus. Will wasn’t ready to let him be finished, now that he was finally explaining things.

“And then you didn’t answer one of my first questions...”

He looked at Will with disapproval. “Which one?”

“Why can’t I connect with your....design? Why can’t I see you, when I can see everyone else?”

Hannibal paused thoughtfully. “As children, we have mirror neurons in our brains to help us better connect with others, to help us assume other people’s points of view and socialise easier. As we grow, they melt away. I believe yours did not, so you are left with too much empathy, too much understanding. You are able to assume the points of view of almost anyone by looking at evidence they leave behind, thought you have taught yourself to ignore this gift so you may cope without being overwhelmed, usually by avoiding social contact. But I leave no evidence you would recognise for your mind to connect to a profile, so you cannot empathise with me.”

“So my mind is broken? I’m just another kind of crazy?” The words bothered Will more than they should—probably because Hannibal’s speculation hit home. He’d been told he was autistic, because of his refusal to interact with anyone or anything beyond his established net of safety, and he’d always suspected it was just the opposite of autism—he could understand people *more* than perfectly fine, and that was what drove his isolation.

“I tell you that I can hunt down serial killers and track your scent, and you are concerned that you are the freak?” Hannibal laughed. “Do not worry, Will. It is only a theory.” His face tightened. “Which brings us back to you.”

Will sighed. How to begin?

“Are we not past all the evasions now?” Hannibal reminded him softly. “I am looking forward to your latest theory.”

Will bit his lip. Hannibal looked down at him, his maroon eyes unexpectedly gentle.

“I will not laugh,” he promised.

“I’m more afraid you’ll be angry at me.”

“Is it that terrible?”

“Pretty much, yeah.”

Hannibal waited. Will was looking down at his hands, so he couldn’t see Hannibal’s expression.

“Go ahead.” Hannibal’s voice was calm.

“I don’t know where to start,” admitted Will.

“Why not start at the beginning? You said you did not come up with this on your own.”

“No.”

“What inspired it—a book? A movie?” Hannibal probed.

“No—it was Saturday, at the beach.” Will risked a glance up at his face. Hannibal looked puzzled. “I ran into a girl I used to know—Beverly Katz,” he continued. “She and I lived in the foster home that Billy runs on the reservation together.”

Hannibal still looked confused.

“Billy is one of the Quileute elders.” Will watched Hannibal carefully. His confused expression froze in place. “We went for a walk, and she told me one of the old legends—trying to scare me, I think. She told me one....” Will hesitated.

“Go on.”

“About vampires.” Will realised he was whispering. He couldn’t look at his face now, but he saw Hannibal’s knuckles tighten convulsively on the wheel.

“And you immediately thought of me?” Still calm.

“No. She....mentioned you.”

Hannibal was silent, staring at the road.

Will was worried suddenly, worried about protecting Bev. “She just thought it was a silly superstition,” he said quickly. “She didn’t expect me to think anything of it. Chilton just said something about you, trying to provoke me, and she said you didn’t come to the reservation, only it sounded like she met something different. So I got Beverly alone and tricked it out of her.”

“What did you do then?” Hannibal asked after a minute.

“I did some research on the Internet.”

“And did that convince you?” Hannibal’s voice sounded barely interested. But his hands were still clamped hard onto the steering wheel.

“No. Nothing fit. Most of it was just kind of stupid. And then....” Will stopped.

“What?”

“I decided it didn’t matter,” he whispered.

“It didn’t *matter*?” Hannibal’s tone made him look up—Will had finally broken through his carefully composed mask. Hannibal’s face was incredulous, with just a hint of the anger Will had feared.

“No,” said Will softly. “It doesn’t matter to me what you are.”

A hard, mocking edge entered Hannibal’s voice. “You do not care if I am a monster? If I am a *monster*?”

“No.”

Hannibal was silent, staring straight ahead again. His face was bleak and cold.

“You’re pissed off,” Will sighed. “I shouldn’t have said anything.”

“No,” said Hannibal, but his tone was as hard as his face. “I would rather know what you are thinking—even if what you are thinking is insane.”

“So I’m wrong again?” Will challenged.

“That is not what I am referring to. ‘It doesn’t matter’!” he quoted, gritting his teeth together.

“So I’m right?”

“Does it *matter*?”

Will took a deep breath. “Not really.” He paused. “But I *am* curious.”

Hannibal was suddenly resigned. “What is it you are curious about?”

“How old are you?”

“Eighteen,” Hannibal answered promptly.

“And how long have you been eighteen?”

Hannibal’s lips twitched as he stared at the road. “A long while,” he admitted at last.

“Okay.” Will smiled, pleased that he was getting honest answers. Hannibal stared at him with watchful eyes, much as he had before, when he was worried Will was going into shock. “Don’t laugh—but how come you can come out during the daytime?”

Hannibal laughed anyway. “That is a myth.”

“Burned by the sun?”

“Myth.”

“Sleeping in a coffin?”

“Myth.” He hesitated for a moment, and a peculiar tone entered his voice. “I cannot sleep.”

It took Will a minute to absorb that. “At all?”

“Never,” Hannibal said, his voice nearly inaudible. He turned to look at Will with a wistful expression. The garnet eyes held Will’s, and Will lost his train of thought.

“You have not asked me the most important question yet.” Hannibal’s voice was hard again, and when he looked at Will his eyes were cold.

Will blinked, still dazed. “What one is that?”

“You are unconcerned about my diet?” he asked sarcastically.

“Oh,” Will muttered, “that.”

“Yes, *that*.” Hannibal’s voice was bleak. “Do you not want to know if I consume blood?”

Will flinched. “Well, Bev said something about that?”

“What did Beverly say?”

“She said you....hunt people. She said you weren’t supposed to be as dangerous because you hunted differently.”

“She said I wasn’t dangerous?” Hannibal’s tone was deeply sceptical.

“Not exactly. She said you weren’t *supposed* to be dangerous. But the Quileutes didn’t want you on their land, just in case. So was she right? About not hunting people like usual?” Will tried to keep his voice was even as possible.

“The Quileute people have a long memory,” Hannibal whispered.

Will took that as confirmation.

“Do not let that make you complacent, though,” he warned Will. “They are right to keep their distance from me. I am still dangerous.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I try,” Hannibal explained slowly. “I am usually very good at what I do. Sometimes, however, I make mistakes. For example, allowing myself to be alone with you.”

“This is a mistake?” Will heard the sadness in his own voice, but he didn’t know if Hannibal could as well.

“A very dangerous one.”

They were both silent then. Will watched the headlights twist with the curves of the road. They moved too fast; it didn’t look real, it looked like a video game. He was aware of the time slipping away so quickly, like the black road beneath them, and Will was hideously afraid that he would never have another chance to be with Hannibal like this again—openly, the walls between them gone for once. Hannibal’s words hinted at an end, and Will recoiled at the idea.

“Tell me more,” Will asked desperately, not caring what he said.

Hannibal glanced at him quickly, startled by the change in Will’s tone. “What more do you desire to know?”

“Tell me how you hunt without being dangerous,” Will suggested, his voice still tinged with desperation.

“I do not *want* to be a monster, though I am acutely aware that I am one.” His voice was low.

“So you drink, what, animal blood?”

Hannibal paused. “That would be rather like a human trying to subsist solely on pure lemon juice. No, I still have to consume human flesh.”

“But you’re *not* dangerous? And you still hunt people?”

“‘People’ is an objective term. I hunt serial killers.”

“Holy *shit*,” Will mumbled.

“And I am very good about self-restraint. I find I can last two or three weeks after a successful hunt. But at some moments it is more difficult to resist than others.”

“Is it....difficult for you right now?” asked Will.

Hannibal sighed. “Yes.”

“But you’re not hungry,” he said confidently—stating, not asking.

“Why do you believe that?”

“Your eyes. I told you I had a theory. I’ve noticed that people are crabbier when they’re hungry.”

Hannibal chuckled. “You are quite observant.”

“Were you hunting this weekend? With your uncle?”

“Yes.” He paused for a second, as if deciding whether or not to say something. “My uncle has been dead for quite some time. I tell everyone he is alive because it is easier to keep people away from asking too many questions. I did not want to leave to hunt, though it was necessary. It is easier to be around you when I am not so hungry.”

“Why didn’t you want to leave?”

“It makes me....anxious.... to be away from you.” Hannibal’s eyes were gentle but intense, and they seemed to be making Will’s bones turn soft. “I was not joking when I asked you to try not to perish last Thursday. I was quite distracted all weekend, worrying about you. And after what happened tonight, I am surprised that you did make it through a whole weekend unscathed. It was a very long three days.” He smiled ruefully at Will.

“Three days? Didn’t you just get back today?”

“No, I returned Sunday.”

“Then why weren’t you in school?” Will was frustrated, almost angry as he thought of how disappointed he’d felt because of Hannibal’s absence.

“You asked if the sun hurt me, and it does not. But I cannot go out in the sunlight—at least, not where anyone may see.”

“Why?”

“I will show you sometime,” Hannibal promised.

Will thought about it for a moment. “You still could have called me.”

Hannibal was puzzled. “But I knew you were safe.”

“But *I* didn’t know *you* were. I—” He hesitated, dropping his eyes.

“What?” Hannibal’s voice was compelling.

“I didn’t like it. Not seeing you. It made me anxious.” Will blushed to be saying this out loud.

He was quiet. Will looked up, apprehensive, and saw that Hannibal looked pained.

“Ah,” Hannibal groaned quietly. “This is wrong.”

Will couldn’t understand his response. “What did I say?”

“Do you not see, Will? It is one thing for me to make myself miserable, but a wholly different thing for you to be so involved. I do not want to hear that you feel that way.” His voice was low but urgent. His words cut Will. “It is wrong. It’s not safe. I am dangerous, Will—please grasp that.”

“No.” Will tried very hard not to look too much like a petulant child.

“I am serious,” Hannibal growled.

“So am I. I told you, it doesn’t matter what you are. It’s too late.”

His voice whipped out, low and harsh. “Never say that.”

Will bit his lip and was glad Hannibal couldn’t know how much that had hurt. He stared out at the road. They had to be close now; Hannibal was still driving much too fast. He saw Hannibal reach toward him with his right hand, but then Hannibal stopped and placed it slowly back on the steering wheel.

“I am sorry.” His voice burned with regret. Will knew Hannibal wasn’t just apologising for his words.

The darkness slipped by them in silence.

“Will I see you tomorrow?” Will asked. They were slowing, passing into the boundaries of Forks. It had taken less than twenty minutes.

“Yes—I have a paper due, too.” Hannibal smiled. “I will save you a seat at lunch.”

It was silly, after everything they’d been through tonight, how that little promise made Will unable to speak.

They were in front of Jack’s house. The lights were on, Will’s truck in its place, everything utterly normal. It was like waking from a dream. Hannibal stopped the car, but Will didn’t move beyond slipping Hannibal’s jacket off, taking one last sniff.

“You may keep it—you do not have a jacket for tomorrow,” Hannibal reminded him.

Will handed it back anyway. “I don’t want to have to explain anything to Jack.”

“Ah, right.” He grinned.

Will hesitated, his hand on the door handle, trying to prolong the moment.

“Will?” asked Hannibal in a different tone—serious, but hesitant.

“Yeah?” He turned back to Hannibal too eagerly.

“Will you make a me promise?”

“Yes,” Will said, and instantly regretted it. What if Hannibal asked him to stay away?

“Do not go into the woods alone.”

Will stared at him in blank confusion. “Why?”

“I am not always the most dangerous thing out there. Let us leave it at that.”

Will shudder slightly at the sudden bleakness in Hannibal's voice, but he was relieved. This, at least, was an easy promise to honour. "Whatever you say."

"I'll see you tomorrow," Hannibal sighed, and Will knew he wanted him to leave now.

"Tomorrow, then."

Will walked up the stairs slowly, a heavy stupor clouding his mind after their conversation in the car. He went through the motions of getting ready for bed without paying any attention to what he was doing. It wasn't until he was in the shower—the water too hot, burning his skin—that he realised he was freezing. He shuddered violently for several minutes before the steaming spray could finally relax his rigid muscles. Then he stood in the shower, too tired to move, until the water began to run out.

He stumbled out, wrapping a towel around his waist, trying to hold the heat from the water in so the aching shivers wouldn't return. Will dressed for bed quickly and climbed under quilt, curling into a ball, and he wished Jack would have let him keep one of his dogs, to help keep him warm and ease some of the anxiety. A few small shudders trembled through him,

Will's mind still swirled dizzily, full of images he couldn't understand, and some he fought to repress. Nothing seemed clear at first, but as he fell gradually closer to unconsciousness, a few certainties became evident.

About three things Will was absolutely positive. First, Hannibal was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him—and Will didn't know how potent that part might be—that thirsted for Will's blood. And third, Will was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him.

Complications

Chapter Summary

> “It is sunset,” Hannibal murmured, looking at the western horizon, obscured as it was with clouds. His voice was thoughtful, as if his mind was somewhere far away. Will stared at him as he gazed out the windshield.
> Will was still staring when Hannibal’s eyes suddenly shifted back to his.
> “It is the safest time of day for me,” Hannibal said, answering the unspoken question in Will’s eyes. “The easiest time. But also the saddest, in a way.... The death of another day, the return of the night. Darkness is so predictable.” He smiled wistfully.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was unusually foggy in the morning; the air was almost smoky with it. The mist was ice cold where it clung to the skin on Will’s face and neck. He couldn’t wait to get the heat going in his truck. It was such a thick fog that Will was a few feet down the driveway before he realised there was a car in it: a Bentley. His heart thudded, stuttered, and then picked up in double-time.

Will didn’t see where Hannibal came from, but suddenly Hannibal was there, pulling the passenger side door open for him.

“Do you want to ride with me today?” Hannibal asked, amused by Will’s expression as he caught him by surprise yet again. There was uncertainty in Hannibal’s voice. He really was giving Will a choice—Will was free to refuse, and part of Hannibal hoped for that.

It was a vain hope.

“Yeah, thank you,” Will said, trying to keep his voice calm. As he stepped into the warm car, he noticed Hannibal’s khaki jacket was slung over the headrest of the passenger seat. The door closed behind him, and, sooner than should be possible, Hannibal was sitting next to him, starting the car.

“I brought the jacket for you. I did not want you to get sick.” Hannibal’s voice was guarded. Will noticed that Hannibal wore no jacket himself, just a rust-coloured button-up shirt with a black pinstriped vest over it. Again, it was all tailored perfectly. It was a colossal tribute to Hannibal’s face that it kept Will’s eyes away from his body.

“I’m not a delicate teacup,” Will grumbled, but he pulled the jacket onto his lap, pushing his arms through the too-long sleeves, curious to see if the scent could possibly be as good as he remembered. It was better.

“Are you sure?” Hannibal contradicted in a voice so low Will wasn’t sure is Hannibal meant for him to hear.

They drove in silence through the fog-shrouded streets, always too fast, feeling awkward. Will was, at least. Last night all the walls were down....almost all. Will didn’t know if they were speaking as candidly today. It left him tongue-tied.

Hannibal turned to smirk at him. “No twenty questions today?”

“Do my questions bother you?” Will asked, relieved.

“Not as much as your reactions do.” Hannibal looked like he was joking, but Will couldn’t be sure.

Will frowned. “Do I react badly?”

“No. Therein lies the problem. You take everything so coolly—it is unnatural. It makes me wonder what you are thinking.”

“I always tell you what I’m really thinking.”

“You edit.”

“Not very much.”

“Enough to slowly drive me into insanity.”

“You don’t want to hear it,” mumbled Will. As soon as the words were out, he regretted them. The pain in his voice was faint; he could only hope Hannibal hadn’t noticed it.

Hannibal didn’t respond, and Will wondered if he had ruined the mood. Hannibal’s face was unreadable as they drove into the school parking lot.

When Will walked into Psych, Alana was sitting in the back row, nearly bouncing off her seat in agitation. Will reluctantly went to sit by her, trying to convince himself that it would be better to get it over with as soon as possible.

“Tell me everything!” she commanded before he was in his seat.

“What do you want to know?” hedged Will.

“What happened last night?”

“He bought me dinner, and then he drove me home.”

Alana glared at him, her expression stiff with scepticism. “Was it like a date—did you tell him to meet you there?”

Will hadn’t thought of that. “No—I was surprised to see Hannibal there.”

Her lips puckered in disappointment at the transparent honesty in his voice. “But he picked you up from school today?”

“Yeah—that was a surprise too. He noticed I didn’t have a jacket last night,” Will explained.

“So are you going out again?”

“He offered to drive me to Seattle Saturday because he thinks my truck isn’t up to it—does that count?”

“Yes.” Alana nodded.

“Well, then, yeah.”

“W-o-w.” She exaggerated the word into three syllables. “Hannibal Lecter.”

“I know,” Will agreed. ‘Wow’ didn’t even begin to cover it.

“Wait!” Her hands flew up, palms towards him like she was stopping traffic. “Has he kissed you?”

“No,” he mumbled. “It’s not like that.”

Alana looked disappointed. Will was sure he did, too.

“What did you talk about?” She pushed for more information in a whisper. Class had started, but the teacher wasn’t paying close attention and they weren’t the only ones talking.

“I don’t know... Lots of stuff,” he whispered back. “We talked about the essay a little.” A very, very little. Will thought he mentioned it in passing.

“Please, Will,” she begged. “Give me some details.”

“Well, the waitress was flirting with him—you should have seen it. It was over the top. But he didn’t pay any attention to her at all.”

“That’s good. Was she pretty?”

“Very—and probably nineteen or twenty.”

“Even better. Hannibal must like you.”

“I think so. Hard to tell. He’s always so cryptic.”

“I don’t know how you’re brave enough to be alone with him so much,” she breathed.

“Why?” Will was shocked, but Alana didn’t understand his reaction.

“He’s so...intimidating. I wouldn’t know what to say to him.” She made a face, probably remembering last night, when he’d turned the overwhelming force of his eyes on her.

“I do have some trouble with coherency when I’m around him,” Will admitted.

“Well, he is unbelievably gorgeous.” She shrugged as if this excused any flaws.

“There’s a lot more to Hannibal than that.”

“Really? Like what?”

Will wished he had let it go when he’d had the chance.

“I can’t explain it right..... But he’s even more unbelievable *behind* the face.” The vampire who wanted to be good—who ran around saving people’s lives so he wouldn’t be a monster.... Will stared toward the front of the room.

“Is that *possible*?” She giggled.

Will ignored her, trying to look like he was paying attention to the teacher,

“So you like him, then?” Alana wasn’t about to give up.

“Yeah,” Will said curtly.

“I mean, do you *really* like him?” she urged.

“Yeah,” he said again, blushing. He hoped that detail wouldn’t register in her thoughts.

Alana had had enough with the single syllable answers. “How *much* do you like him?”

“Too much,” Will whispered back. “More than I think he likes me. But I don’t see how I can help that.” He sighed, one blush blending into the next.

“You’re not sitting with us today, are you?” Freddie guessed.

“I don’t think so.” Will couldn’t be sure that Hannibal wouldn’t disappear again.

But outside the door to their French class, leaning against the wall—looking more like a Norse god than anyone had a right to—Hannibal was waiting for Will. Freddie took one look, rolled her eyes, and departed.

“See you later, Will.” Her voice was thick with implications. Will was going to have to check her blog to make sure there weren’t any updates later.

“Hello.” Hannibal’s voice was amused.

“Hi.”

Will couldn’t think of anything else to say, and Hannibal didn’t speak—biding his time, Will presumed—so it was a quiet walk to the cafeteria. Walking with Hannibal through the crowded lunchtime rush was a lot like his first day here: everyone stared.

Hannibal led the way to the same cafeteria table they'd sat at before, still not speaking, though his eyes returned to Will's face every few seconds, their expression speculative. From the other end of the table, a group of seniors gazed at them in amazement as they sat across from each other. Hannibal seemed oblivious as he pulled a still-warm Tupperware container filled with sausage and eggs from his backpack. He set the container down on the table and pushed it towards Will.

"What is that?" Will objected. "You didn't make all that for me?"

Hannibal shook his head. "Some is for me, of course."

Will raised one eyebrow.

"Take whatever you desire," Hannibal said, sliding a fork from his backpack towards him.

"I'm curious," Will said, as he stabbed a slide of sausage on the fork, staring at it, "as to what inspired you to do this if you don't eat food."

"You are always curious." Hannibal grimaced, shaking his head. He glared at Will, holding his eyes as he lifted a second fork and speared a piece of sausage on it, deliberately biting off a mouthful, chewing slowly. Will watched, eyes wide.

"You do not need to eat sweets to survive, yet you do, do you not?" he asked condescendingly. "We all need hobbies, Will. I, for one, happen to enjoy cooking. I am very particular about what I put into my body."

Will took a bite of the eggs—it was surprisingly good—and shrugged, looking away, knowing where he was about to start.

"So, do you truly believe that you care more for me than I do for you, or did I eavesdrop on the wrong conversation?" Hannibal murmured, leaning closer to Will as he spoke, his dark red eyes piercing.

"You know, eavesdropping is pretty rude, Hannibal."

"I have...very sensitive hearing, and Miss Bloom speaks rather loudly. Are you going to answer my question?" Hannibal was sounding irritated.

Will looked down. "Yes."

"Yes, you are going to answer the question, or yes, you truly think that?"

"Yes, I really think that." Will kept his eyes down on the table, his eyes tracing the pattern of the faux wood grain printed on the laminate. The silence dragged on. He stubbornly refused to be the first one to break it this time, fighting hard against the temptation to peek at his expression.

Finally Hannibal spoke, voice velvet soft. "You are wrong."

Will glanced up to see that Hannibal's eyes were gentle. "You can't know that." He shook his head in doubt, thought his heart throbbed at Hannibal's words and he wanted so badly to believe them.

"What makes you think so?" Hannibal's liquid garnet eyes were penetrating—like he was trying futilely to lift the truth straight from Will's mind.

Will stared back, struggling to think clearly in spite of his face, to find some way to explain. As he searched for the words, he could see the other boy getting impatient; frustrated by his silence.

"Let me think," Will insisted. Hannibal's expression cleared, now satisfied that he was planning to answer. He stared at his food as he finally spoke.

"Well, aside from the obvious, sometimes....." Will hesitated. "I can't be sure—I can't read your mind—but sometimes it seems like you're trying to say goodbye when you're saying something else." That was the best Will could do to sum up the sensation of anguish that his words triggered in him as times.

"Perceptive," Hannibal whispered. And there was the anguish again, surfacing as he confirmed Will's fear. "That is exactly why you're wrong, though. What do you mean by 'the obvious'?"

"Look at me," Will said, unnecessarily as he was already staring. "I'm completely ordinary—well, aside from all the near-death experiences and slipping into people's minds. And look at you." He waved his hand toward Hannibal and all his bewildering perfection.

Hannibal's brow creased angrily for a moment, then smoothed as his eyes took on a knowing look. "You do not see yourself very clearly, you know. I will admit, you are correct about the bad things," he chuckled blackly, "but trust me, this once—you are the opposite of ordinary."

Will's embarrassment was much stronger than his pleasure at the look that came into Hannibal's eyes when he said this. Will quickly reminded him of his original argument.

"But I'm not the one saying goodbye," Will pointed out.

"Do you not see? That's what proves me right. I care the most, because if I can do it"—he shook his head, seeming to struggle with the thought—"if leaving is the right thing to do, then I will hurt myself to keep from hurting you, to keep you safe."

Will glared. "And you don't think I'd do the same?"

"You would never have to make the choice."

Abruptly, Hannibal's mood shifted again; a mischievous, devastating smile rearranged his features. "Of course, keeping you safe is beginning to feel like a full-time occupation that requires my constant presence."

"No one has tried to do away with me today," Will reminded him, grateful for the lighter subject. He didn't want Hannibal to talk about goodbyes anymore.

“Yet,” Hannibal added.

“Yet,” he agreed; Will would have argued, but now he wanted Hannibal to be expecting disasters.

“I have another question for you.” Hannibal’s face was still casual.

“Shoot.”

“Do you really need to go to Seattle this Saturday, or was that an excuse to get out of the dance?”

Will made a face at the memory. “I’m still blaming you for Eldon Stammets thinking I’m going to prom with him.”

“Oh, he would have found a chance to ask you without me,” he chuckled. Will would have been angrier if Hannibal’s laughter wasn’t so fascinating. “If I had asked you, would you have turned me down?”-

“Probably not,” Will admitted. “But I would have cancelled later—faked sick or something.”

Hannibal was puzzled. “Why would you do that?”

“You’ve never seen me in Gym, I guess, but I’m one of the least graceful people around here.”

“That would not be a problem.” Hannibal was very confident. “It is all in the leading.” He could see that Will was about to protest, and he cut him off. “But you never told me—are you resolved on going to Seattle, or do you mind if we do something different?”

As long as the ‘we’ part was in, Will didn’t care about anything else. “I’m open to alternatives,” Will allowed. “But I do have a favour to ask.”

Hannibal looked wary, as he always did when Will asked an open-ended question. “What is that?”

“Can I drive?”

He frowned. “Why?”

“Well, mostly because I told Jack I was going to Seattle alone. If he asked again, I won’t lie, but I don’t think he *will* ask again, and leaving my truck at home would just bring up the subject again unnecessarily. And also because your driving scare me.”

Hannibal rolled his eyes. “Of all the things about me that could frighten you, you worry about my driving.” He shook his head in disgust.

“Where are we going, anyways?”

“The weather will be nice, so I’ll be staying out of the public eye.....and you may stay with me, if you would like to.” Again, Hannibal was leaving the choice up to him.

“And you’ll show me what you meant, about the sun?” Will asked, excited by the idea of unravelling another of the unknowns.

“Yes.” Hannibal smiled, and then paused. “But if you do not want to.....be alone with me, I would still rather you not venture into Seattle by yourself. I shudder to think of the trouble you might find in a city that size.”

Will was miffed. “Look, I lived in New Orleans, it’s twice the physical size of Seattle—”

“But apparently,” Hannibal interrupted, “your number was not up in Louisiana. So I would rather you stay near me.” His eyes did that unfair smouldering thing again.

Will couldn’t argue, with the eyes or the motivation, and it was a moot point anyway. “As it happens, I don’t mind being alone with you.”

“I know,” he sighed, brooding. “You should inform Jack, though.”

“Why would I do that?”

Hannibal’s eyes were suddenly fierce. “To give me some small incentive to bring you back.”

Will gulped. But, after a moment of thought, he was sure. “I think I’ll take my chances.”

Hannibal exhaled angrily, and looked away.

“Let’s talk about something else,” Will suggested.

“What do you wish to talk about?” Hannibal asked. He was still annoyed.

Will glanced around them, making sure they were well out of anyone’s hearing. “When you said you went hunting with your uncle... Is that something I might get to see?”

“Absolutely not!” Hannibal’s face turned even whiter than usual, and his eyes were suddenly furious. Will leaned back, stunned and—though he’d never admit it—frightened by his reaction. Hannibal leaned back as well, folding his arms across his chest.

“Too scary for me?” Will asked when he could control his voice again.

“If that were it, I would take you out tonight,” said Hannibal, his voice cutting. “You *need* a dose of fear. Nothing could be more beneficial for you.”

“Then why?” Will pressed, trying to ignore the other boy’s angry expression.

Hannibal glared at him for a long minute. “Later,” he finally said. He was on his feet in one lithe minute.

“Later, then.” Will wouldn’t forget.

Gym didn't go smoothly. Will somehow managed to hit himself in the head with his racket and clip Alana in the shoulder on the same swing. He spent the rest of the hour in the back corner of the court, the racket held safely behind his back. Despite being handicapped by Will, Alana was pretty good; she won three games out of four singlehandedly. She gave Will an unearned high-five when the coach finally blew whistle, ending class.

"So," Alana said as they walked off the court.

"So what?"

"I saw the way Hannibal was staring at you at lunch—like you were something to eat. Are you guys *official* now?"

Will choked back the hysteria that threatened to explode, but a small giggle managed to get out despite his best efforts. Alana glowered at him. He waved and fled to the locker room.

Will dressed quickly, something stronger than butterflies battering recklessly against the walls of his stomach.

By the time he walked out of the gym, Will had just about decided to walk straight home without even looking toward the parking lot. But his worries were unnecessary. Hannibal was waiting, leaning casually against the side of the gym, his breathtaking face untroubled now. As Will walked to his side, he felt a peculiar sense of release.

"Hey," Will breathed.

"Hello." Hannibal's answering smile was brilliant. But Will had to stop a few steps away—a crowd of people, all boys, were surrounding it. Then Will realised they weren't surrounding the Bentley, they were actually circled around a red convertible, unmistakable lust in their eyes. None of them even looked up as Hannibal slid between them to open his door. Will climbed in quickly in the passenger side, also unnoticed.

"Ostentatious," Hannibal muttered.

"What kind of car is that?" Will asked.

"A BMW M3. Bedelia's car."

"Wow."

"I usually provide Bedelia with transportation. Today was obviously an exception."

"If she has *that*, why does she ride with you?"

"As I said, it's ostentatious." Hannibal rolled his eyes, not looking at Will, trying to back out without running over the car enthusiasts. "At any rate, I will be on your doorstep bright and early Saturday morning."

"Um, it doesn't help with the Jack situation if an unexplained Bentley is left in the driveway."

Hannibal smile was condescending now. “I was not intending to bring a car.”

“How—”

Hannibal cut him off. “Do not worry about it. I’ll be there, no car.”

Will let it go. He had a more pressing question. “Is it later yet?”

He frowned. “I supposed it is later.”

Will kept his expression polite as he waited.

Hannibal stopped the car. Will looked up, surprised—of course they were already at Jack’s house, parked behind the truck. It was easier to ride with him if Will only looked when it was over. When Will looked back at Hannibal, he was staring at him, measuring him with his eyes.

“And you still want to know why you cannot see me hunt?” He seemed solemn, but Will thought he saw a trace of humour deep in his eyes.

“Well,” clarified Will, “I was mostly wondering about your reaction.”

“Did I frighten you?” Yes, there was definitely humour there.

“No,” Will lied. Hannibal didn’t buy it.

“I apologise for scaring you,” he persisted with a slight smile, but then all evidence of teasing disappeared. “It was just the very thought of you being there...while I hunted.” His jaw tightened.

“That would be bad?”

Hannibal spoke from between clenched teeth. “Extremely.”

“Because....?”

Hannibal took a deep breath and stared through the windshield at the thick, rolling clouds that seemed to press down, almost within reach.

“When we hunt,” he spoke slowly, unwillingly, “we give ourselves over to our senses...govern less with our minds. Especially our senses of smell. If you were anywhere near me when I lost control that way...” Hannibal shook his head, still gazing morosely at the clouds.

Will kept his expression firmly under control, expecting the swift flash of Hannibal’s eyes to judge his reaction that soon followed. Will’s face gave nothing away.

But their eyes held, and the silence deepened—and changed. It wasn’t until Will’s head began to swim that he realised he wasn’t breathing. When he drew in a jagged breath, breaking the stillness, Hannibal closed his eyes.

“Will, I think you should go inside now.”

Will opened the door, and the arctic draft that burst into the car helped clear his head. Afraid he might stumble in his woozy state, he stepped carefully out of the car and shut the door behind himself without looking back. The whir of the automatic window unrolling made him turn.

“Will,” Hannibal called after him, his voice even. He leaned toward the open window with a faint smile on his lips.

“Yeah?”

“Tomorrow it is my turn.”

“Your turn to what?”

Hannibal smiled wider, flashing his gleaming teeth. “Ask the questions.”

Jack left in the morning with a goodbye wave and one last check on Bella, and Will went upstairs to brush his teeth and gather his books. When he heard the cruiser pull away, he could only wait a few seconds before he had to peek out of his window. The Bentley was already there, waiting in Jack’s spot in the driveway. Will bounded down the stairs and out the front door, wondering how long this bizarre routine would continue. He never wanted it to end.

Hannibal was waiting in the car, not appearing to watch as Will walked to the car, pausing shyly before opening the door and stepping in. Hannibal was smiling, relaxed—and, as usual, perfect and beautiful to an excruciating degree.

“Good morning.” Hannibal’s accent was silky. “How are you today?” His eyes roamed over Will’s face, as if his question was something more than simple courtesy.

“Good, thanks.” Will was always good—much more than good—when he was near Hannibal.

Hannibal’s gaze lingered on the circle under Will’s eyes. “You appear tired.”

“Couldn’t sleep,” Will confessed.

“Neither could I,” teased Hannibal as he started the engine.

Will laughed. “I guess that’s right. I supposed I slept just a little bit more than you did.”

“I’d wager you did.”

“So what did you do last night?” Will asked.

Hannibal chuckled. “Not a chance. It’s my day to ask questions.”

“Oh, that’s right. What do you want to know?” Will’s forehead creased. He couldn’t imagine anything about himself that could be in any way interesting to Hannibal.

“What’s your favourite colour?”

Will rolled his eyes. “It changes from day to day.”

“What’s your favourite colour today?” Hannibal was still solemn.

“Probably brown.”

Hannibal snorted, dropping his serious expression. “Brown?” he asked sceptically.

“Sure. Brown is warm. I *miss* brown. Everything that’s supposed to be brown—tree trunks, rocks, dirt—is all covered with green squashy stuff here,” Will complained.

Hannibal seemed fascinated with his little rant. He considered for a moment, staring into Will’s eyes. “You’re right,” he decided, serious again. “Brown is warm.” He reached over, swiftly, but somehow still hesitantly, to sweep Will’s hair out of his face.

It continued like that for the rest of the day. While Hannibal walked Will to English, when he met him after French, all through lunch, Hannibal questioned him relentlessly about every insignificant detail of his existence. Movies Will had liked and hated, the many places he’d been and the many places he wanted to go, and books—endlessly books.

Will couldn’t remember the last time he’d talked so much. More often than not, he felt self-conscious, certain he had to be boring Hannibal. But the absolute absorption of Hannibal’s fae, and his never-ending stream of questions, compelled Will to continue. Mostly Hannibal’s questions were easy, only a very few triggering his easy blushes. But when he did flush, it brought on a whole new round of questions.

Such as the time Hannibal asked about his favourite gemstone, and he blurted out garnet before thinking. Hannibal had been flinging questions at Will with such speed he felt like he was taking one of those psychiatric word-association tests. Will was sure Hannibal would have continued down whatever mental list he was following, except for the blush. Will’s face reddened because, until very recently, his favourite gemstone was topaz. It was impossible, while staring back into Hannibal’s garnet eyes, not to remember the reason for the switch. And, naturally, Hannibal wouldn’t rest until he’d admitted why he was embarrassed.

“Tell me,” Hannibal finally commanded after persuasion failed—failed only because Will kept his eyes safely away from the other boy’s face.

“It’s the colour of your eyes today,” Will sighed, surrendering, staring down at his hands as he fiddled with the cap to his water bottle. “I suppose if you asked me in two weeks I’d say onyx.” He’d given more information than necessary in his unwilling honesty, and he worried it would provoke the strange anger that flared whenever he slipped and revealed too clearly how obsessed he was.

But Hannibal’s pause was very short.

“What kinds of flowers do you prefer?” he fired off.

Will sighed in relief, and continued with the psychoanalysis.

Gym passed quickly as Will watched Alana’s one-woman badminton show. He hurried to change afterward, ill at ease, knowing that the faster he moved, the sooner he would be with Hannibal. The pressure made him clumsy, but eventually he made it out the door, feeling the same release when he saw Hannibal standing there, a wide smile automatically spreading across his face. Hannibal smiled in reaction before launching into more cross-examination.

Hannibal’s questions were different now, though, not as easily answered. He wanted to know what Will missed about his home, insisting on descriptions of anything he wasn’t familiar with. The two sat in front of Jack’s house for hours, as the sky darkened and rain plummeted around them in a sudden deluge.

Hannibal’s quiet, probing questions kept Will talking freely, forgetting, in the dim light of the storm, to be embarrassed for monopolising the conversation. Finally, when Will had finished detailing how he’d developed a habit of collecting stray dogs at home, Hannibal paused instead of responding with another question.

“Are you finished?” Will asked in relief.

“Not even close—but Sheriff Crawford will be home soon.”

“Jack!” Will suddenly recalled his existence, and sighed. He looked out at the rain-darkened sky, but it gave nothing away. “How late is it?” he wondered aloud as he glanced at the clock. Will was surprised by the time—Jack would be driving home by now.

“It is sunset,” Hannibal murmured, looking at the western horizon, obscured as it was with clouds. His voice was thoughtful, as if his mind was somewhere far away. Will stared at him as he gazed out the windshield.

Will was still staring when Hannibal’s eyes suddenly shifted back to his.

“It is the safest time of day for me,” Hannibal said, answering the unspoken question in Will’s eyes. “The easiest time. But also the saddest, in a way.... The death of another day, the return of the night. Darkness is so predictable.” He smiled wistfully.

“I like the night. No night, no stars.” Will frowned. “Not that you see the stars here much.”

Hannibal laughed, and the mood abruptly lightened. “Jack will be here in a few minutes. Unless you want to inform him you will be with me Saturday...” He raised one eyebrow.

“Thanks, but no thanks.” Will gathered his books, realising he was stiff from sitting still so long. “So, my turn tomorrow?”

“Certainly not!” Hannibal’s face was teasingly outraged. “I told you I was not done, didn’t I?”

“What more is there?”

“You will find out more tomorrow.” Hannibal reached across to open Will’s door for him, and his sudden proximity sent Will’s heart into frenzied palpitations.

But Hannibal’s hand froze on the handle. “Not good,” he muttered.

“What is it?” Will was surprised to see that Hannibal’s jaw was clenched, his eyes disturbed.

Hannibal glanced at him for a brief second. “Another complication,” he said glumly. He flung the door open for Will in one swift movement, and the moved, almost cringed, away from him.

The flash of headlights through the rain caught Will’s attention as a dark car pulled up to the curb just a few feet away, facing them.

Will hopped out at once, despite his confusion and curiosity. The rain was louder as it glanced off his jacket. He tried to make out the shapes in the front seat of the other car, but it was too dark. He could still see Hannibal illuminated in the glare of the new car’s headlights; he was still staring ahead, his gaze locked on something or someone Will couldn’t see. Hannibal’s expression was a strange mix of frustration and defiance.

Then Hannibal revved the engine, and the tires squealed against the wet pavement. The Bentley was out of sight in seconds.

“Hey, Will,” called a familiar female voice from the driver’s side of the little black car.

“Beverly?” Will asked, squinting through the rain. Just then, Jack’s cruiser swung around the corner, his lights shining on the occupants of the car in front of him.

Bev was already climbing out, her wide grin visible even through the darkness. In the passenger seat was a much older man, a heavyset man with a memorable face and surprisingly familiar eyes, black eyes that seemed at the same time both too young and too ancient for the broad face they were set in. Beverly’s foster father, Billy Black. Will knew him immediately, though in the more than five years since he’d seen him last Will had managed to forget his name when Jack had spoken of him his first day in Forks. Billy was staring at Will, scrutinizing his face, so Will smiled tentatively at him. Billy’s eyes were wide, as if in shock or fear, his nostrils flared. Will’s smile faded.

Another complication, Hannibal had said.

Billy still stared at him with intense, anxious eyes. Will groaned internally. Had Billy recognised Hannibal so easily? Could he really believe the impossible legends his foster daughter had scoffed at?

The answer was clear in Billy’s eyes. Yes. Yes, he could.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry this update took so long. (⊙﹏⊙✿)

I did proof-read this section two times, but if you notice anything, please tell me so I can correct it (or, if you want to beta this, that'd be superb too).

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!